



DOCTRINE

Various Topics

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THE WORD OF GOD - THE BASIS OF OUR FAITH

Isaiah 40:6-8-

The voice said, "Cry out!"
And he said, "What shall I cry?"
"All flesh is grass,
And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.
⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.
⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever."

It is certainly argued which point, or aspect, of religion and faith is to be held as preeminent. This is especially true because there are innumerable religions, and there are countless texts out there which claim religious authority.

And within adherence to those various religions, whether defined by a tradition, a text, or simply an adherent who claims divine inspiration to speak on behalf of God, there are still innumerable interpretations of how to correctly pursue what is presented within a particular religion.

Does anyone here think that all Buddhists are united in how they interpret the teachings of Buddha? Obviously not. There are as many subdivisions within Buddhism as there are kernels of corn in Iowa at harvest time.

Did everyone in Jamestown accept the words of Jim Jones equally? Again, obviously not. Some gladly drank the grape juice while others were forced to do so. Are Muslims united in their theology? If they are, they wouldn't be blowing one another up as much as they do, and there wouldn't be Shiites, Sunnis, and Wahhabis – along with countless other divisions among them.

Each different religion, and each difference within a religion, must come from somewhere – even if it is simply from the mind of a lunatic – L. Ron Hubbard anyone?

What is it that is preeminent in religion that would define one particular religion as right and proper, and how can it be known that adherence to that one right religion is doctrinally correct?

In a random list of possibilities, not intended to place any above another so as to incorrectly settle the matter in your mind now, we could consider various points and try to establish which is the most noble, which is the most important, and which is to be preeminently considered before the others.

Here are some options –

The nature of grace. The Trinity. The nature and/or attributes of God. The Deity of Christ. The Humanity of Christ. The need for Christ. The nature of Sacred Doctrine. The sovereignty of God. The all-sufficient atonement of Christ. The salvation of man. Eternal security in salvation. How man is saved. The covenants of God. The dispensations of time. Israel. The existence of God. The nature of man. Creation. The nature of Creation. The glory of God. Heaven and hell.

Which of these, or is it some other not mentioned, is most necessary for us – as human beings – to know what is right and proper to place first in our search for the truth of God and the disposition of man within the stream of time?

Text Verse: *“If a man of wind were to come and say falsely, ‘I will preach to you of wine and strong drink,’ he would be just the preacher for this people!” Micah 2:11 (BSB)*

Adding to our list, how about the nature of good and evil? Wouldn't that be an appropriate starting point in our quest for the truth? If there is good, there must be a source of goodness. If there is evil, there must be a reason for it to exist and a source from where it is derived. Right?

No, rather all such things, even the nature of God, must be pursued, logically, from a source which reveals those things to us. I could have just said, “the nature of God Himself,” but that would be presupposing that God has revealed Himself in the masculine.

Maybe God is female, as some claim. My use of the masculine would be a point of contention with Him... I mean Her, if so. How can we determine what is correct in all things theology? Or, can we even do so?

The answer is, “Yes.” However, the answer will actually take some thought to get us to that point. Yes, you are going to have to use your brains today, and you are going to have to think about things logically and rationally.

That is absolutely necessary to know if the word of God is, in fact, the word of God. “Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the Lord.” The Lord wants you to think your faith through, and He wants you to be well prepared to then explain it to others.

Such truths, believe it or not, are to be found in His Superior Word, and so, let’s both turn to and contemplate that precious word once again, and may God speak to us through His word today. And may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Reasoned Defense

Of the great works of Christian philosophy, somewhere right at the very top of the list, is what is known as the Summa Theologica. It is the massive and detailed work of Thomas Aquinas, written from 1265-1274. It is considered one of the most influential works of western literature. In it, Aquinas evaluates a vast array of subjects, many of which we just considered a moment ago.

He discusses the nature of God and the Godhead. He discusses the problem of evil. He evaluates what the natures of man and angels are like. He looks into the law and also into grace. There is hardly a subject that one could think of in relation to religion that Aquinas didn’t evaluate. And he did it in an order that allows a person to think logically from one premise to the next.

With this in mind, what discipline did he place first? What was the one thing that set the parameters for all of the other things he would discuss, including the very nature of God? The answer is “Sacred Doctrine,” meaning Scripture. His first subject, or as he puts it, his first Question is –

“Question 1. The nature and extent of sacred doctrine.” From there, he asks, discusses, and answers the following ten questions: Is it necessary? Is it a science? Is it one or many? Is it speculative or practical? How it is compared with other sciences? Is it the same as wisdom? Is God its subject-matter? Is it a matter of argument? Does it rightly employ metaphors and similes? May the Sacred Scripture of this doctrine be expounded in different senses?”

The logic of placing the nature and extent of Sacred Doctrine first is impeccable. Without a surety of knowing what Sacred Doctrine is, nothing else in religion matters. Everything, including the nature of God and all that proceeds from Him, is subject to error.

We can deduce things about God without a source of writing which tells us of Him. In fact, we can be positive about a host of things about Him without ever first being told those things.

We can also do this concerning creation, about who we are as a species, and so on. Man has done this since the beginning, and he continues to do it today. We can logically work out things that must be because of things that are. However, there are also deficiencies and defects in man which can cause us to make limited or incorrect conclusions about such things as well. Despite having knowledge, we don't have all knowledge.

But, with knowledge we can often – if we are willing to – prove things false much more readily than we can prove things to be true. If we look at religious beliefs, for example, we can see a common thread among many of them. There is the proclamation that there is a “God,” or there are “gods,” and that we are accountable to Him or them.

However, by simply thinking the matter through logically, man can actually know – with all certainty – that there is only one “God,” meaning the Source of all things. We can, in fact, know this.

Therefore, we can be sure that any religion which proclaims more than one God cannot be true. If you can't see how this is possible, go back and watch our Genesis 1:1 sermon. There we discuss the First Principles. First Principles are statements of logic which are undeniable, or which can be reduced to the undeniable. We will even talk about some of them later here and in upcoming sermons.

From there, and understanding that there is a God, just One, we can also further determine what this God must be like. Aristotle was able to do this. He deduced that there is a God, and then he deduced many things about Him that Christians today take as axioms concerning Him.

For example, there can be no change in God. Aristotle explains why this must be so. Aquinas builds upon that and further defines it. Did Aristotle have the Bible to tell him this? No! He simply thought the matter through logically. And you can too.

As God does not change, that will then further refine our pursuit of “which” God, if any, is the true God as claimed by His adherents.

Taking the god of Islam, for example, we can read the text which describes “Allah” the god of Islam, and we can know if what it says about God is correct or not. The Koran says that there is “one God.” Well, that matches what we can know is certain. Is that the end

of the test? Do we now bow down and say, “O great Allah, you are “god” and there is none other!”?

No, more is needed. God doesn’t change. Does Allah, the god of Islam change? Yes. He is vindictive. He also proclaims one thing and then another, but not in a logical way. Rather the supposed god of Islam changes in his very nature by the proclamations he makes. We can toss out Islam, and we can toss out Allah.

See, this isn’t that difficult. Man has been given a brain to use, if he will but use it. God did this so that man will seek Him and reach out for Him. He is actually not far from us. Man has, however, invented many gods, but because there is one God, man can – and very well should – be able to say, “This is a lie. This is not ‘God.’”

So, we know there is one God, and we can know things about this God. This then allows us to search out the supposed revelations of God, like the Koran, and say, “No, this ain’t God.” Eventually, through this process – and if it exists – we come to what is truly “Sacred Doctrine.”

We are presented with a copy of the Bible. This word of God says there is one God. That passes the test. The word then says, “For I *am* the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). So far so good. But what about the verses which seem to show that He does change?

Do those actually reveal this, or are those supposed changes in Him merely logical and orderly revelations of Himself for our benefit and understanding, but not actually changes in His being? Through careful study, we find out that this is the case. God hasn’t changed. Rather, we have changed in relation to Him, and the result is obvious and expected based on His unchanging nature.

And so, after reading what is truly Sacred Doctrine, meaning the proclaimed Word of God, or what we would call the “Holy Bible,” we are convinced that this is how God has revealed Himself to us, including in the masculine – something we were trying to avoid as a presupposition a few minutes ago. He has done this, and so we follow suit – He, Him, Father, etc.

And so now, with this carefully and precisely laid out word, this text of Sacred Doctrine that finds its source in God, we continue to expose faulty conclusions concerning Him. As we have already seen, there are countless denominations and cults all claiming this word as their source and authority for right doctrine. How can that be, and this still be the Word of God?

The answer is not that there is a problem with either God or His word. The answer is found in us and in our translations and interpretations of this precious gift of life and restoration. We act no differently about our own text than Muslims do about theirs. They don't engage their brains, and we don't engage our brains.

The Jews stop with one testament and one over-arching covenant. Some supposed Christians do this as well by falling back on the Old when the New has set it aside. But right there in the Old is the promise of a New. The same God who does not change is not changing still. He is slowly and progressively revealing Himself.

And so, knowing this, we can toss out Judaism – in all its forms – as being a proper evaluation of Sacred Doctrine – it is not. The Old Testament is proper revelation, but it is incomplete. And in tossing out this theology, we can then toss out the theology of some Christians, such as Dual-Covenant theologians like John Hagee. Such heretics teach that Christians are saved through the New Covenant, and Jews are saved through adherence to the Old. This is even taught by the Roman Catholic Church – the church of Thomas Aquinas.

And yet, there is more to consider. The New Testament, which details the New Covenant, also details some very precise revelations of God, of who He is, and of what He has done. For example – and of which will be explained in greater detail in another sermon – the Bible clearly shows that though God is One, there are different persons within the Godhead.

And more, there are not two or five or twenty or a hundred. The revelation of Sacred Doctrine, which is the only source for knowing this aspect of God, shows us that there are three individual Persons within the Godhead – not more, not less.

There is a Person we call the Father. There is a Person we call the Son. And, there is a Person we call the Holy Spirit. Each is clearly revealed to be God based on the nature of who God is.

However, there are some denominations and cults which deny this. There are others who affirm it but then violate laws concerning the nature of God that we don't even need Scripture for in order to know they are wrong.

For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses state that Jesus is a created being – denying His deity – and yet they say that Jesus is the Creator of all things other than Himself. We don't need the Bible to know this is incorrect. All we need to do is think it through logically.

For Jesus to be a created being, and yet to create all other things beside Himself, would violate the Principle of Contingency, the Positive Principle of Modality, and the Principle of Existential Causality. To understand this, go back and watch the Genesis 1:1 sermon. And so, we can toss out their teaching.

Likewise, Mormonism also teaches that Jesus was a created being. He was a man who became God. The same principles apply as those we just saw. But Mormonism also adds another Testament to Sacred Doctrine. Without going into all the details and faults of this supposed text – of which there are many – it violates what is explicitly stated in the New Testament writings, and it is false. Mormonism can be tossed out.

As you can see, the brilliance of Aquinas' logic of placing the nature and extent of Sacred Doctrine first is evident. One must be able to determine *if* there is such a text. That is possible without even having such a text.

In other words, there may *not* be a true text of sacred doctrine. God may have just not revealed Himself in this way. But that doesn't mean we can't know if all of the false texts which *claim* to be sacred doctrine are false. We can. If they don't match what we can know by simply using our brains through logic, then they are false.

From there, and if such a text actually does exist, one must be able to determine if *how the text is presented* is acceptable or not. This can be determined from within the text itself, such as through revealing a misunderstanding of what Paul says in relation to something that Jesus says.

It can, at times, also be determined from outside of the text – by simply using logic, such as the necessity for Jesus to be God if He is the Creator of anything.

If He created anything at all, even one coffee bean, then He must have created all things – and no thing which is created came into existence apart from Him. The Bible may tell us this – and it does, in Colossians 1 – but we don't need the Bible to do so for us to know it is true, as we have already learned.

Logic necessarily precedes God's revelation of Himself in order for us to know if this (or that) is God's revelation. If it (meaning logic) does not come first, then we cannot truly know if it is God's revelation.

This is exactly why there are so many religious texts, and this is why there are so many religions. And this is why the immensely intelligent Albert Einstein, a Benedict Spinoza pantheist, spent the rest of his life – after discovering the Theory of Relativity – working

on the theory of everything. Yes, his worldview said that all is God (Pantheism), meaning the universe is the manifestation of God.

He did not want to accept that his logic, which is revealed in Relativity, confirmed the very source of his Judaism, meaning Sacred Doctrine – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Through Relativity, Einstein proved there was a beginning. If there was a beginning, there must be a Beginner.

The Bible says that God precedes His creation. He is not a part of it. That didn’t fit with Einstein’s presuppositions about the universe and about the god he believed in. Hence, his continued work on the theory of everything.

However, if we now know that God has revealed Himself in this manner, meaning through Sacred Doctrine – of which we are convinced He has – then we must still use logic to know if our understanding of what He has revealed is correct.

This is exactly why there are so many denominations within Christianity, and so many – countless variations in fact – disparate doctrines which come to completely opposite conclusions concerning Christian theology.

Again, logic must precede God’s revelation of Himself in order for this to not occur. If it does not, then any and all of those religions, denominations, and even cults, are on an equal standing before your eyes. You actually have no basis for saying one is more or less valid than another.

Some of you are now sitting here and saying, “But the Bible proclaims faith, not logic. We are to ‘live by faith and not by sight.’” Yes, I know that verse. It is 2 Corinthians 5:7, I’ve written a commentary on it, and that is not what Paul is speaking about. He is speaking about our existence *in Christ*, after having made a decision *for Christ*.

And biblical faith is not, as the vast majority of people seem to believe, blindly stepping into acceptance of the Bible. It is exactly the opposite. It is stepping into the revealed light of God, which is the Bible. Nobody comes to a saving faith in Jesus unless he has heard about Jesus. And the knowledge of Jesus is recorded where? Yes, in the pages of Sacred Doctrine – the Holy Bible.

Again, there has to be a basis for your faith, or your faith has no basis. This does not mean that God does not accept you because of your faith. Rather, God accepts you based on your faith which was based on His word which He has revealed. It is light, you

heard it, and you accepted it. But you had to logically put those things together in your head when you heard the word.

As Paul says in Romans 10:17, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” God did the revealing, you did the analysis, you found it reasonable, and you then – only after logically thinking it through – demonstrated faith in what the Bible revealed to you.

This is why God made the gospel so simple, and the means of obtaining it so simple. It is because too much needed logic, and most people would never get saved. The gospel’s simplicity is its own mark of the infinite grace of God.

As we have seen though, there are those who say Jesus is not God, and yet, they proclaim exactly the same verses concerning salvation as those who say Jesus is God.

Therefore, again, logic must precede the faith, and that logic precedes the revelation of God in His word. It doesn’t mean it is more important, but it is a necessary part of the process in order to come to accept whether the message is true or not.

The title of this sermon is “The Word of God – The Basis of our Faith,” and that is true. The salvation of God which is found in Jesus Christ our Lord is only found for us in the word of God – whether transmitted orally, in writing, in a play on a stage, on a computer, or some other way. *We are not getting saved without faith, and we cannot have faith without the word.*

God is pleased with our faith in Christ when we hear this word and accept it as such. But there is a world full of people that do not. They have already either rejected the truth, and/or they have accepted something other than the truth.

How will they be saved unless you are willing to show them that what they have in their hands is false, and that what you have in your hands is true? If you care about their state at all, then you have an obligation to, as Peter says, “...always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” 1 Peter 3:15.

The word Peter uses there, which is translated as “defense,” is *apologia*. It signifies not a dubious doctrine based on blind faith, but a well-reasoned reply for an issue which is raised. In ancient courts, it signified a legal defense and a reasoned argument.

*The word of God, holy and pure
Is given to us from His wise and loving hand*

*Through this word, our faith is strong and sure
Because of our God, through it we can Him understand*

*We can know what is right for salvation unto life
And we can know when to reject that which is wrong
Through sound doctrine, we can weed out theological strife
And have doctrine which is sure, sound, and strong*

*Praise be to God who has given us this precious word
Praise be to God who has shown us what is true and right
The pages of the Bible are a precious cutting sword
Weeding out all that is false and revealing God's glorious light*

II. The Problem of Evil, the State of Man, Israel, the Nature of Creation, the Prophetic Word, etc.

The word of God has been given by God. The Bible makes this claim. It is up to man to either prove it false, or to accept it as true. By simply thinking the matter through – in a very limited way – we have seen how man has determined logically that there is one God. From there, we have seen what this one God must be like.

We have reduced the religious expressions of the world, through simple logic, to one possible expression which reveals God as He is – biblical Christianity. We could include biblical Judaism, but that is simply an incomplete revelation of Himself to the world.

The coming of Christ, and the introduction of the New Covenant, supplants the expression of God as limited to the Old Testament. But it is certain that the Bible is a big book, we are not going to prove or disprove every aspect of it here in the next few minutes.

Nor are we going to defend or prove false every point of doctrine to be found in the Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, Methodism, fundamental Baptists, and so on. Those things will take a lifetime of study and contemplation. And it shouldn't be necessary to rush away from a church simply because of a few minor doctrinal points of disagreement.

But what we can do is contemplate some of the aspects of what the Bible presents, and then decide if what it says aligns with how things are. In other words, why would someone read the Bible and put their hopes in a word which mischaracterized the state of man?

Likewise, why would someone look to the Bible for the plan of salvation if it got the problem of evil wrong? In fact, when there is an error in something, the thing is defective. If something is defective, then why would anyone go to it to correct their own defects?

And yet, people have gone to, and they continue to go to, the Bible for the correction of their defects. Drunks become productive citizens, harlots become faithful wives, the miserable are made joy-filled. There is a power in the word which transforms lives.

And as desperately as its enemies have attempted to challenge the Bible, there has been no successful challenge to it since it was first given to man through the hands of Moses 3500 years ago. Since then, it has been added to by God through men of God right up until John received the book of Revelation and then finished it with the word “Amen” in Revelation 22:21.

It accurately details the problem of good and evil – how it came about, what He would do to correct it, and why it continues to this day. Yes, the Bible explains how evil is cured, and when evil will be eradicated forever. In this, there is nothing left unattended to. What was lost in Eden will be restored in God’s coming Paradise.

How often it is said, “If God was truly God, He would eliminate all the evil in the world.” But that is a shallow and naive way of looking at how things work. It assumes that evil is out of the control of God’s sovereignty, but the Bible very clearly shows that it is not.

In fact, time and again what we consider to be true evil is used by God for good purposes and for His glory. Adam fell, Cain killed Abel, and from Joseph’s troubles in Egypt to man’s trouble with sin being laid upon Christ, God uses evil to bring about good.

We look at the cross as the highest expression of love, grace, and mercy, and it is so. And yet, you can be guaranteed that Jesus’ mother, Peter and the other apostles, and indeed many who saw Christ being crucified would have said, “This is evil. So why has God allowed it?”

Do you see the fallacy and naiveté of those who question God’s competence because of their own supposed standards of what is good and what is evil and what God is doing about those things?

What is appropriate is to say that God has allowed evil into the world for His purposes, those things bring Him glory, and the evil will come to an end in His timing. If someone

desires to use the problem of evil as a point of discrediting the God revealed in Scripture, they will find no satisfaction in their attempt.

The problem of evil is accurately explained in Scripture, it is properly death with by God in Scripture, and its end is assured in Scripture. That which was good at the beginning will be good again at the consummation of all things.

*The state of man – from how he got here, to what his purpose is – is exactly expressed in Scripture. The desperately evil human heart is spoken of there. Go check Jeremiah 17:9. The chains which bind man are described there.

The freedom which man seeks is revealed there. The relationship between man and his Creator is defined there. If someone is looking to prove the Bible wrong, the state of man will not satisfy his goal.

*Some people look at Israel and deny Scripture because of them. That may be the most perverse ideology of all. In fact, exactly the opposite is true. Israel's rejection of God does not in any way call into question the reliability of Scripture.

Rather, the words of the Lord, through the writings of Moses, foretold what has subsequently been revealed. Israel's rejection of the Lord, the Lord's continued faithfulness to Israel, and the prophetic timeline of such events – all recorded in His word – confirm time and again the reliability of what God has spoken.

If someone is in hopes of calling the word of God false because of either what it says about Israel, or what Israel says about the Lord, they have simply rejected what is clearly printed about both in it. And in fact, the attempts to destroy Israel are merely attempts to find some fatal flaw in God's word which has not yet been found.

If only Israel can be destroyed, the word will be proven false and man will no longer have the convicting power of it hanging over their heads. Such is the dream, and such is the hope for a world which hates God, rejects His word, and finds the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ deplorable. But the Lord has spoken –

“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel;
They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them;
They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.
¹⁵ I will plant them in their land,
And no longer shall they be pulled up

From the land I have given them,
Says the Lord your God.” Amos 9:14, 15

Israel stands, and Israel will stand. They have been planted again in their land, and they shall remain rooted there forever. The Lord God has spoken, and it shall be. If someone is looking to find fault in the Bible, the nation of Israel is a poor and perfectly pitiful place to attempt to do so.

*But what about something larger than Israel? What about the nature of creation itself? The Bible doesn't attempt to argue that there is a God – a Creator. Instead, the Bible proclaims His existence and then it explains how He created. Further, it does so in a logical, orderly, fashion. God speaks, information is transmitted, and creation stands firm.

Rather than a universe which created itself, a logical impossibility by the way, the Bible reveals exactly what logic demands. There is existence, the existence is not necessary and yet it exists, and therefore there must be a necessary Being that exists in order for all other things – which are not necessary – to exist.

And not only that, but there can be only one necessary Being. That is God, and the Bible proclaims Him as such –

“For thus says the Lord,
Who created the heavens,
Who is God,
Who formed the earth and made it,
Who has established it,
Who did not create it in vain,
Who formed it to be inhabited:
I am the Lord, and there is no other.” Isaiah 45:18

And within the realm of creation, the Bible explains that things don't always work as they were originally intended to, why that is so, and how it will be corrected. The Bible also explains aspects of creation, stating them as axioms, that were not understood until modern times.

For those who desperately desire to break off the chains of God by disproving the Bible's claims concerning the Creator and His creation, their efforts only end in embarrassing futility. The word of God stands because it is, in fact, the word of God.

*And there is another aspect of the word which not only confirms that God is, but that God knows. He didn't just create and let things go however they may come about. Rather, He reveals – in His word – things that will come to pass before they occur. He does this so that when they come about, man can say, “My trust in God is not in vain.” He even explains this to us so that we are all the more assured of what lies ahead –

“Behold, the former things have come to pass,
And new things I declare;
Before they spring forth I tell you of them.” Isaiah 42:9

The things He has spoken have come about, and the new things He reveals are assured to happen as well. Not a word of the word shall ever fail, because it is the word of God who cannot fail.

The prophecies of God, both those that are expressly spoken, and those that are typologically prophetic, and which have already been fulfilled, are so numerous and so specific that there is literally no excuse for those who see them and deny what they reveal.

The prophetic word, for those who have heard it, seen it fulfilled, and who yet reject it will stand as an eternal witness against them. God has spoken, His word has come to pass, and man will stand before God and receive his just due for how he has responded to that same prophetic word.

*I am the One who created all things
And by Me all things are held together
My works are that of which the angel sings
Stretching out the heavens, they go on forever*

*I am the Lord who called Abraham so long ago
I am the One who renamed Jacob Israel
I spoke from the burning bush to Moses, so you know
And of Me, David in the psalms does tell
I am the Word of God, who was and is and is to come
And I offer the water of life; be pleased to partake of some*

III. Common Sense Concerning the Word

One obvious question about the word of God, and one which is probably most often levied against it, is that of source texts. “Why are there variations in texts?” “How can we be sure that it is one rather than another?” And, “Don’t these variety of texts disprove the very premise that the Bible is the word of God?”

The answer to each is, “No,” but it is also not a study that can be completed in a few short minutes. Entire books have been devoted to the matter. Scholars dedicate their entire lives to this field. But, in short, the very fact that there are numerous source texts – even if they vary in content – will validate the reliability of the word.

If there are 10 source texts, and one of them says ABC in Isaiah 53, and the other 9 say XYZ in the same place, then it is rather certain that XYZ is the correct reading. This is especially so when these source texts come from different locations, different languages, different points in time, etc.

This could not be the case if there was only one source text. Nobody would know if the source was accurate or not. And there are other logical reasons why God would not want one single text to be the only source of His word. There is great wisdom in God’s word *not* being kept in any single man’s possession.

And so, for five groups to have five texts, each with some type of minor error in one place or another, but four of the texts having no error in the same place as any other text, it actually benefits the scholar. There is not just a reasonable certainty of the text, but a convincing certainty of it.

What we possess in our hands may have variations based on source texts which people can quibble over, but the substance of the words is as reliable as the over-arching message of the whole.

No major point of doctrine in Scripture is in question, and the absolute reliability of the word of God is evidenced through the amazing care God has taken to preserve His word in various ways, places, and languages throughout history.

If this is a point where you would question your faith, then spend the time needed to study this discipline. Give up 10 or 20 hours of TV a week that you watch, and instead, go learn just how reliable this word is.

When reading your Bible, forget the commentaries that may be provided with the text. Instead, read the footnotes which are also provided. They are where the mechanics of the accuracy of the word of God can be found.

For example, what you might read is something that at first causes you to question the Bible's reliability. You read the footnote and find a difference between some texts, of which they cite the Greek, Hebrew, Samaritan, Masoretic, Vulgate, and Dead Sea Scrolls.

And yet, when you see that only the Masoretic Text and a few lesser Hebrew manuscripts say DEF, but all the others say GHI, you will realize that a corruption occurred, possibly on purpose, to hide Jesus, such as occurs in the Masoretic Text of Psalm 22 and of Isaiah 53.

But when you learn that the Greek and the Latin were both translated out of the Hebrew, long before the time of the Masoretic Text, and that the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls and the Greek both predate the coming of Christ, then you can say, "Aha! I understand!"

Your faith in the word will not be diminished. Rather, your faith in man will rightly be reduced, and your glory to God will be magnified when you realize that He has actually protected His word, even from the manipulations by His own chosen people who rejected Him when they rejected Christ.

Have confidence in God, be sure of His word, and trust that what He has proclaimed concerning His Son, His redemption, and His future promises to you are surer than the ground under your feet. Use your brain when you are presented with a doctrine you may have been unaware of before.

There is that which is of God and is reasonable, and there is that which comes from man and is simply wrong. Unless you are willing to study in order to show yourself approved, you will most likely not be approved. Proper theology is hard work, but the rewards for pursuing it are heavenly.

As a good summary of this marvelous treasure, this gift and blessing from God, an unknown person penned the following words which are often printed in the Gideon's Bible. Think on what you hear as I read to you what it says –

"The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and

the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

I implore you now, to always consider the word of God. Handle it carefully, treat it as the most precious jewel you possess, and love it as God in Christ loves you. It is the *rhema*, the written word of God, that speaks of the *logos* – meaning the Word, Christ Jesus –the expression of God in Whom He reveals Himself.

Cherish the one and you will cherish the other.

Closing Verse: *"All flesh is as grass,
And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,
²⁵ But the word of the Lord endures forever.'*

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you." 1 Peter 1:24, 25

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD - CALVINISM, OR “SOMETHING ELSE?”

Isaiah 44:9-23.

⁹“All who make idols are nothing,
and the things they treasure are
worthless.

Those who would speak up for them
are blind;

they are ignorant, to their own
shame.

¹⁰ Who shapes a god and casts an
idol,

which can profit nothing?

¹¹ People who do that will be put to
shame;

such craftsmen are only human
beings.

Let them all come together and take
their stand;

they will be brought down to terror
and shame.

¹² The blacksmith takes a tool
and works with it in the coals;

he shapes an idol with hammers,

he forges it with the might of his
arm.

He gets hungry and loses his strength;

he drinks no water and grows faint.

¹³ The carpenter measures with a line
and makes an outline with a

marker;

he roughs it out with chisels

and marks it with compasses.

He shapes it in human form,

human form in all its glory,

that it may dwell in a shrine.

¹⁴ He cut down cedars,

or perhaps took a cypress or oak.

He let it grow among the trees of the
forest,

or planted a pine, and the rain
made it grow.

¹⁵ It is used as fuel for burning;

some of it he takes and warms
himself,

he kindles a fire and bakes bread.

But he also fashions a god and
worships it;

he makes an idol and bows down to
it.

¹⁶ Half of the wood he burns in the
fire;

over it he prepares his meal,

he roasts his meat and eats his fill.

He also warms himself and says,

“Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.”

¹⁷ From the rest he makes a god, his
idol;

he bows down to it and worships.

He prays to it and says,

“Save me! You are my god!”

¹⁸ They know nothing, they

understand nothing;

their eyes are plastered over so
they cannot see,

and their minds closed so they
cannot understand.

¹⁹ No one stops to think,

no one has the knowledge or

understanding to say,

“Half of it I used for fuel;

I even baked bread over its coals,

I roasted meat and I ate.

Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left?

Shall I bow down to a block of wood?"

²⁰ *Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him;
he cannot save himself, or say,*

"Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?"

²¹ *"Remember these things, Jacob,
for you, Israel, are my servant.*

*I have made you, you are my servant;
Israel, I will not forget you.*

²² *I have swept away your offenses like a cloud,
your sins like the morning mist.*

*Return to me,
for I have redeemed you."*

²³ *Sing for joy, you heavens, for the Lord has done this;
shout aloud, you earth beneath.*

*Burst into song, you mountains,
you forests and all your trees,
for the Lord has redeemed Jacob,
he displays his glory in Israel."*

The week I typed this particular sermon, I also typed up the week's prophecy update. As you know, at the end of the prophecy update – which is often a bit of a downer in its contents – I add in one or two ironic things that have happened in the recent past. I do this to end on a fun note rather than on something that might be depressing or maddening. The two ironies for the week were –

- 1) On a Tiny Island that Bans Guns, the Only Prosecutor is Shot Dead, and
- 2) "Lucky" Buddhist Statue Topples Over and Crushes Religious Leader as It Is Unveiled in Thailand.

It's hard to imagine two better lead-ins into the subject of the sovereignty of God. The first example is because as soon as there is a tragedy in our lives, the preeminent question which arises in our minds is, "Where is God in this?"

We may ask, "How could God allow this to happen?" We may ask, "Wasn't God big enough to stop this?" A hundred variations of this line of thought will come to mind, or they may even be spoken aloud as we implicitly accuse God of not being in control.

The second example could follow suit, at least for the friends and family of the monk who got scrunched. But would they have a right to ask this? They lost someone who was crushed by a concrete image of Buddha that fell over.

We could stop right there and ask a few logical questions. “Where did the concrete come from?” “Is concrete used for other things?” “Do we pray to or petition our concrete house?” “Do we pray to or petition the sidewalk?” What is it that makes the lucky (or in this case – not so lucky) Buddha different than a concrete urinal in the public restroom?

Text Verse: *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” 1 John 5:21*

What is it that we are worshiping when we fall down before, and pray to, lucky Buddha? It is the work of our own hands. It is the imaginations of our own mind. It is almost a form of man worship, because we are giving our devotion to something man has made.

But isn’t that the same as questioning why God allows the death of someone close to us? Is God required to serve our happiness? Is this the point of the Creator’s existence – to serve His creation and make sure that it remains happy, content, and free from calamity? Or, in this, have we not fashioned a god in our own minds rather than allowing God to be God.

God is sovereign. He is sovereign over His creation, He is sovereign over how He allows access to Himself, He is sovereign over suffering, He is sovereign over all things. There is no thing which is outside of His knowledge, ability, or presence. Nothing happens apart from Him. He is omniscient, He is omnipotent, and He is omnipresent.

Therefore, He is sovereign. And the sovereignty of God means that whatever happens has been allowed by Him. We may question why something happens, and we may question how it fits into His plan, but we may not – ever – impute an implied state of incompetence or wrongdoing to God in the process of our questioning.

Such truths are to be found in His superior word. And so, let’s contemplate that precious word once again. And, may God speak to us through His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Free to Will, or Not Free to Will

Most Christians will acknowledge the sovereignty of God. Even if we don't think about it much, we take it as an axiom that God is in full control and that He is fully capable of working things out as they should be.

The questions that arise from us, such as "Why did God allow this to happen?", show a weakness in our understanding, and that usually comes from not being properly trained in the ways of God. But even if we get it. Even if we understand that God is in complete control, we still may not understand what that means in regard to the things we do.

It would be impossible, even in a hundred sermons, to define everything about the sovereignty of God, but one of the greatest questions of all, and one of the greatest doubts of all – even by some of the finest theologians in Christian history – comes down to the question of free will. Does man have free will? If so, how far does that free will go? Does it extend to doing good? Does it extend to salvation? Or, does man actually not have free will at all?

One thing that is evident and clear – even without the Bible – is that God knows the future. But the Bible does proclaim it as well –

“Behold, the former things have come to pass,
And new things I declare;
Before they spring forth I tell you of them.” Isaiah 42:9

He created all things in a single moment. Relativity proved this. Time, space, and matter all came into existence at the same time. None of the three can exist without the other two. They are all dependent on the existence of the others.

But they could not have created themselves. If they did, then there would have been the existence of each of them before they existed, meaning all three would have existed already – a logical contradiction. Therefore, there is a Being which brought them into existence who is not a part of them. The Bible says this is God, who is also the deity of the Lord Jesus –

“because by him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities: all things have been created by him and for him.

¹⁷ And *he* is before all, and all things subsist together by him.”
Colossians 1:16, 17 (Darby)

God has no matter; He is not bound by time; and He is not limited in space. Because of this, His being – for the lack of a better word – is above all matter. This means above in power, in presence, and in how it subsists.

In other words, when we look at the vastness of the known universe, and in all of the power displayed there, He is – right now and for all time – in control of it.

We may see a tremendous storm and think, “What a display of God’s power.” We may see the enormity of a volcano and tremble at the destruction which flows from it. Or, we may look to the nuclear weapons we have created and think, “What an awesome display.” The mechanics of a small bit of plutonium and a few other elements combine to create such power. And from that, we can think about how God was the One who set that power into those things.

But consider this, all of the power and energy that man has ever seen on this earth, or that he will ever see on this earth, doesn’t compare to a millionth of a second of the power released in the rest of the universe.

That is the matter. But there is also space. With our telescopes – of various kinds and which peer into assorted diverse places of the universe – we have an idea of the size of what we call “the known universe.”

The implication is that there is still “the unknown universe.” But, of the known universe alone, which stretches out, as they say, 93.016 billion light-years, not one micrometer is outside of the presence of God.

If we were to travel on one of our space shuttles, which can move at 5 miles per second, it would take about 37,200 years to go one light-year. Multiply that times 93 billion light-years. And now consider that in three dimensions. We may ask, “Where is God in this?” during a catastrophe, but the answer comes right back, “He is here, and He is everywhere else – right now.”

That is the matter, and that is the space. But there is also time – the third element which necessarily came into existence with the other two. It is often said that before God created time, He lived in the eternal state.

The word “eternal” has two general meanings. The first is a condition where there is no beginning or end. The second is that which lasts forever. The first is the one used to describe the state God is in. The universe had a beginning, but God was there before that. It is He who did the beginning, putting it all together. That is found at various times in Scripture, such as –

“Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” Psalm 90:2

As this is so, He is before time, and He is outside of time. Thus, logically, like being in all places at one time, and like having all power of all of the universe at all times, He also fills all time at all times. His being is present with Adam right now, and His being is hovering over the cross of Calvary – right now. His being is with Jacob as he agonizes over the loss of his beloved son Joseph, and His being is on the road which Paul is taking to Damascus in order to persecute Christians in that city.

His being is here in this church, and His being is there at the rapture – and indeed He is present at all times which is throughout all of time that ever has existed or ever will exist – right now.

He is everywhere, He is at all times, and He possesses all the power contained within the two. And, further, He is not limited to these things; He transcends them. This is the Creator; this is God. This is the One who revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush of Sinai –

“And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM. And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you.” Exodus 3:14 (Darby)

As these things are true of God, they establish the baseline of God’s sovereignty and control in, and over, the universe. In all things – nothing excepted – God is aware of and allows all things to occur, which, in fact, occur.

Anything which does not fit His plans for what occurs will not occur. All that He determined to occur will come to pass. He can cause or prevent anything in order for what He wills to come about. However, those things which do occur, which are morally opposed to His nature, and yet which have come about, have been allowed by Him, though not directly caused by Him.

Some, when contemplating that God is sovereign and that He knows the end from the beginning, cannot accept the idea of free will in man. To them, if God knows the end from the beginning, it must – by its very nature – negate free will in man.

If God already knows what we will do, and if God has already determined how all things will come out, then they would say that we cannot be truly free moral beings. There is real fault in that thinking, from several perspectives.

First, God calls certain things “evil.” There is evil that God abhors. Further, man is capable of committing evil. Therefore, to say that man lacks free will is to then say that God determined the evil, which he abhors. That is a logical contradiction. There are many examples of this in Scripture, but one example will suffice –

“Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. ²They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.” Numbers 25:1-3

These people willfully bowed to a god which is not God. God did not force them to do so, but He also could have forced them to not do so. Therefore, there is an allowance by God of things which stand opposed to His own moral nature.

But, does the fact that there is evil then mean that God is not in control? Not at all. To understand the problem of evil – how it came about, and what it means in relation to God’s plan – you can go back and watch several of the early Genesis sermons, especially the sermon called “Who is the Liar.”

Suffice it to say that evil exists, that God – although the ultimate Cause of all things – does not actively cause evil, and that logically man, therefore, possesses free will. God indirectly controls all things, but He does not directly cause all things to occur.

This, then, is the exterior limits of God’s sovereignty over His creation. Man’s free will, and man’s accountability as to how he exercises his free will is that limit. We can do things which are contrary to God’s nature, and He allows this within His own personal control of creation.

Just because God knows something will happen, it does not mean that free will does not exist. What it means that God’s knowledge, and His plan using that knowledge, has factored in man’s free will.

Though the term “free will” is not explicitly stated in Scripture, the concept is. One does not need to have specific words stated in order to have a concept explicitly stated in another way. In other words, the term “original sin” is not found in Scripture, but it is taught implicitly, and it is stated in another form explicitly. So is free will, explicitly, such as in Deuteronomy 30:15-20 –

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶ in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰ that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

This precept is found, maybe in its most profound sense, in the words of Jeremiah the prophet. Moses could have said to Israel, “You are commanded today to be observant to the Lord your God.” But even that implies free will, because a command is – by default – something that can be disobeyed.

However, a burden was laid upon Jeremiah by the Lord. It is one he strove to cast off – implying free will to do so. And yet, the Lord overrode his ability to do so. Thus, His *allowance* of certain things only extends so far –

“Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him,
Nor speak anymore in His name.’
But His word was in my heart like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;
I was weary of holding it back,
And I could not.” Jeremiah 20:9

The very fact that Jeremiah willed to withhold the name of the Lord and the word of the Lord, but that he could not, proves that he had free will, but it also proves that he was

not free to will. So it is with each and every one of us. But how far does what God desires to occur mean that God will override what could occur. It is an interesting question that is answered within Scripture. For example, 2 Peter 3:9 says –

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

The Lord is not willing that any should perish. But, in countless other places, the same Greek word is used to show that, in fact, many will perish, such as by the hand of Paul in 2 Thessalonians –

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who **perish**, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10

Therefore, though it is God’s will that all will be saved and that none should perish, there must be a limiting factor placed on what God desires, because those He desires to not perish will, in fact, perish.

One of the premises of the Bible is that God is building a church, out of living human beings. Jesus alluded to it in Matthew 16, Paul confirms it and explains it in *1 Corinthians* 3:9 –

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.”

Peter speaks of it then in 1 Peter 2:7 saying, “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” From there, both Paul and Peter say that Christ is the Cornerstone of this building. There is one building, and one Cornerstone of those who are not set to perish.

But one of the limitations of that building is that it will only be built out of those who have faith in Christ, believing His gospel message.

God has set the parameters, one of which is faith. But not merely any faith will do. Rather, a properly directed faith is necessary. It takes real faith to walk into a shopping mall, pull a cord, and blow yourself up in order to destroy others in the process.

There is real faith in the person that what he has been told is true – paradise awaits, along with a bunch of perpetual virgins. The problem with that is not a lack of faith, but it is misdirected faith. And, misdirected faith is, unfortunately, wasted faith.

Using the same word for “perish” that both Paul and Peter did above in regard to those who perish and those who God wills not to perish, Jesus our Lord – Jesus the Lord – says this –

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not **perish** but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:16, 17

God is willing that none should perish, but some – in fact – do perish. And the limiting factor that one should not perish is faith. But it is not any faith. It is faith in Christ Jesus.

Despite the sovereignty of God, He does not force faith. Instead, He allows man the choice. But the fact that some perish does not mean God is not sovereign.

Just because God does not actively cause and direct all things, people assume that He is not sovereign. “Why couldn’t God keep my husband from dying?” But if God must do everything that He can do, and everything that He wills to do, then all things would be done, and there would be nothing to do.

But God has put limitations on Himself in order for things to come about in a way where we can participate in His creation. Along with those limitations, He has set parameters, and He has given guidelines. Some of those are known to us. They are recorded in nature and they are recorded in His word. An example of this is found in Romans:

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” ¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

-Romans 10:14-17

God has set limitations on Himself as to how the message to keep those He wills *to not perish* can do so. One of them is that He has given us the word of God. And within that limitation, he has set the parameters. There must be someone who will proclaim that message.

But there are then other implied parameters. Because a person is limited by time, by movement, by funding, and so on. A person cannot simply stand on a mountain, shout out the gospel, and then expect everyone to hear it.

And so, there are set natural and written parameters which must be adhered to. And yet, these are limited by guidelines. As we saw, faith is how the message moves one from “perish” to “not perish.” And that faith must be proper faith for this to occur.

But some might then say that this dispels the idea of God’s sovereignty. Rather, it upholds it. If there is a message of restoration with God, and if that message is exclusive of all but one avenue, and if that avenue has defined parameters and guidelines which come from God, then it means that God is sovereign over the very process which He at first seems to be incompetent in controlling.

What this tells us, is that God has put a burden on *us* if we care about what He desires. His will, including His will that none should perish, is actually *tied up in our will* in regard to that same precept. If our will says, “I don’t care that some are perishing, then He has allowed our will to override what He wills.”

This is certain because Paul says that the message which has been given must go through us. And further, that the one who carries that message cannot do so unless he is sent. And so, as you sit here, unwilling to assist those who desire to go forth to share the gospel, your uncaring will is, at least in part, the cause of God’s willingness that none should perish to *not* come about. How does that move you? Or does it just not matter to you?

One problem with man’s view of God’s sovereignty is that man places far too high of a view and value on himself, or on the things he possesses or loves than the Bible actually reveals concerning how God views those things.

The Bible says that the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it. As God (as we have already seen) possesses time as well as space and matter, then He possesses all things once and forever. For man to perish, it means that he perishes from the stream of time

going forward. But God does not stop possessing that man at the time he existed. And, therefore, God always possesses that man.

And he may have been a good man or a bad man. But to us, a good man or a bad man is not the same as it is to God. A person to God is, by default, bad. That is the doctrine of original sin. Sin is bad; man has sin; man is bad. But we love people around us without taking that into consideration. God does not.

Those who do not have the sin problem corrected perish. From a certain point, and forever after, they are done. But, they were already done because of the sin in them. God is not out of control when someone perishes. Rather, He has controlled what was already bad by not allowing the person to continue (see Genesis 3:22-24).

The value in man is not in the state in which he arrived. It is in the state which he will become, *if* he comes to God through Christ. That is why Christ came. It was to allow a change in the default position from bad to good.

Therefore, God – the Person of Jesus – came into the stream of humanity in order to bring about the necessary change for man to go from “bad” to “good.” Was God under an obligation to do this? No. Could God have destroyed the entire world? Yes. Did God destroy the world once? Yes, with the exception of eight souls.

Therefore, God’s sovereignty is not in question. The goodness of man, and the usefulness of man to God is. God sovereignly allowed eight to live. God sovereignly chose Israel to bring forth Messiah. God sovereignly stepped out of His eternal realm. And God sovereignly set the parameters, based on these things, to bring man from bad to good.

He is not out of control. Rather, He is in complete control. He is allowing things to occur, despite that control, in order for the man of value, meaning the man brought from “bad” to “good” to come about.

Our arbitrary assigning the concept of “bad” and “good” to those around us is not reflective of how God assigns those same values. This is why Solomon was able to say this to us –

“When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though

a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.” Ecclesiastes 8:16, 17

We look at the plan of redemption, and we say, “If God is not actively redeeming all men, then He must not be in control.” But all men are bad. Therefore, that *any* are redeemed at all shows that God is sovereign over the entire process – both for those who are perishing, and those who are being saved.

The parameters are set, the guidelines are given, and God’s sovereignty stands. What He determines is advanced no matter which occurs. It may not be our will, but our will is not always God’s will, and His standards take priority over our fallen state, and our preferences, desires, and life choices.

However, when our will is in accord with God’s will, then there is a chance that what God is willing to happen, meaning that a particular “bad” person will become a “good” person, will happen. If not, then His will for that unchanged “bad” person, will come to pass. Both the sovereignty of God and the free will of man are on prominent display here.

*“To whom then will you liken Me,
Or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One
Lift up your eyes on high; look and see
Who has created these things, and who is His Son*

*Who brings out their host by number, from darkness to light?
He calls them all by name
This, by the greatness of His might
He will bring Himself glory and fame*

*Through the strength of His power
Not one is missing; all the heavenly host is accounted for
From day unto day and hour unto hour
And as the waves ceaselessly wash up on the shore*

*Great is God, and worthy is He of our praise
Glorious is God, from everlasting to everlasting – unto eternal days*

II. God is Sovereign Over Salvation

If God is Sovereign over all things, as is clearly the case – even if He doesn't actively work out all things – then God must be sovereign over salvation. Jonah, from the belly of the great fish, confirms this with the words, "Salvation *is* of the Lord."

Man cannot save himself because he is already condemned. Jesus says that explicitly in John 3:18. As we are condemned already, then to become uncondemned must come from without ourselves, just as the default state of a computer must be changed from outside. Even if a computer was programmed to change its default settings under certain circumstances, the programming had to come from outside itself originally.

Unfortunately, because of this idea of such a dramatic change in man's default position, and because man cannot change himself, certain aberrant doctrines have arisen over time to say that man is incapable of being changed apart from an *active* working of God.

Such a view proclaims that this is the only way to confirm God's sovereignty over the salvation process. If He doesn't *actively* do every step of the changing, then it somehow would then mean that He is not sovereign over what occurs.

But the fallacy of that is seen in the computer which is given instruction to change its default position. The instructions are given, and they may or may not ever occur. But if the parameters which have been placed into the computer are met, the default position changes.

There was no active participation by the programmer, and yet, he has remained sovereign over the process of change. The error of, for example, Calvinism is in perceiving *how* the process of change is effected in the man.

The question for man is, "As Scripture declares that man's nature is condemned already, and also incapable of saving himself, then how is it possible for a person to choose or desire a relationship with God?" The Calvinist answer is, "He cannot. Therefore, he must be predestined by God for regeneration in order to believe and then to be saved."

This makes the assumption that man cannot see what is good. But that is proven false both in human nature, and in Scripture. Man is not incapable of seeing that which is good, nor is he incapable of pursuing that good thing which he sees.

Further, Calvinism incorrectly uses the words of Paul to show that man cannot make a choice for salvation. Paul says in Ephesians 2 that apart from Christ we “were dead in trespasses and sins.” Calvinism says that one who is dead cannot choose life, nor can he bring about a change in himself any more than a rock could.

This is what is known as a “category mistake” – a fallacy, or an error in thinking. A category mistake is the error of assigning to something a quality or action that can properly be assigned to things only of another category.

Calvinism has taken the category of “dead in trespasses and sins,” meaning spiritually disconnected from God, and it has assigned that same category to living man, who is a rational, cognitive organism that *can* choose both good and evil.

Because of this, Calvinism produces a convoluted theology concerning salvation which says that 1) man is dead; 2) God regenerates man (he is born again by God); and then 3) man chooses Christ, and then – based on that choice – 4) he is saved.

From this error, the other principle points of Calvinism arise. Each based on the original error, and each therefore continuing that original error and expanding on it. Quite possibly the greatest error of this failed theological system is the doctrine of “Limited Atonement,” which says that Jesus died only for the elect, not for all people, and thus only the elect are saved.

Limited Atonement supposedly stands in opposition to another heresy known as Unlimited Atonement in the sense that Christ died for all people, and that all are, therefore, saved. But this is a second category mistake made by Calvinists. The words, Limited Atonement and Unlimited Atonement do not stand alone as the only quality which is assigned to the process of salvation.

John 3:16 says that Christ died for the world, meaning the people of the world, and that whoever – meaning anyone – believes in Him would not perish but would be granted everlasting life. This is substantially repeated elsewhere in various ways and degrees throughout the New Testament.

Therefore, the term Unlimited Atonement is appropriate, but it is only so *potentially*, not *actually*. And the term Limited Atonement is appropriate, actually – *not* because God has limited the atonement, but because we have limited it – either through negligence in transmitting the word to those who could be saved, or through rejection of the word presented to the individual.

God, through the giving of His Son, has granted the *potential* for all men to hear the word, and then for all who hear the word to be saved. But he has only granted that salvation *actually* to those who hear, and who then respond in accord with His word. This is perfectly seen in the words of John –

“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” 1 John 2:2

The sacrifice of Christ is not limited to the elect except in how it is received or rejected. Election is made based upon the free-will exercise of faith in the Object of rightly directed faith, meaning the atoning sacrifice of Christ Jesus.

Understanding this, we can see that God is wholly sovereign over the process of salvation. Man fell, man is in the pit, and God must bring Him out. In this, He has developed the remedy, He has prescribed both the parameters and the guidelines, and He has limited Himself in the process.

To say that God must first regenerate the man is to say that He must make a *second move* in salvation, apart from the giving of His Son. This is not found in Scripture. God has made the move. He has entered into the sphere of His creation, and He now offers that to the people of the world.

Again, just because God does not actively select and regenerate the man, it does not mean that God is not sovereign over the process. The exact opposite is true. If we were the computer mentioned earlier, the default setting is already set – condemned.

But there is a program which has been included in the process which, if enabled, changes the default setting. Unlike a computer which cannot see good and bad, man has that ability (again, Genesis 3:22 says this). The fact that you are listening to this sermon – whether saved or not – testifies to this. Not that this is a good sermon, but you are freely deciding if it is or not. I hope you are not disappointed.

When you execute the appropriate command, the default setting is changed. God’s sovereignty is seen in that He has shown the way of salvation, he has effected and provided the means of salvation, and He has established the mode of salvation.

All who are to be saved will follow the path, they will hear the gospel message, and they will place faith in what they have heard. For those who do not hear, or for those who

reject what they have heard, God is sovereign over that. For those who do hear and respond, God was and is sovereign over that.

No part of the salvation process is out of the control of God, and the glory is given to God through the process. Though upholding what would otherwise be the sovereignty of God, the Calvinistic model does not bring glory to God because it does not follow the process of salvation *as recorded in the word of God*.

But on the other side of the aisle are the countless other religious expressions found in the world, both supposedly Christian and those outside of the realm of that sphere.

There is one common thread between every one of them – be it Roman Catholicism or the Hebrew Roots Movement, or Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and etc. That common thread is works.

For non-Christians, it is works in order to please God so that the man can be saved – whatever that salvation means to the individual. For them, it cries out, “I am my own savior, and God will accept my works as such.”

For supposed Christians, it means works in order to please God *apart* from what Christ has done. For them, it cries out, “God has sent the Savior, but I still must save myself.” It is a rejection of the all-sufficient work of Christ, and it is a desire to show God where His deficiencies were and what the person can do to correct those deficiencies. Both deny the sovereignty of God over the salvation process.

The sovereignty of God says that He is in complete control of all things, but that He has allowed certain things to occur apart from His *direct* control. This is true in creation, it is true in the daily process of our lives – either in harmony with Him or apart from Him, and it is true in the process of salvation which restores the harmony between us and Him.

Concerning God’s sovereignty in the process of salvation, it is just as necessary for God to allow man free will in his decision-making process as it is for Him to impel His will at any time and in any way that He so chooses.

This is because His word has given man the right, the duty, the privilege, and indeed the responsibility to carry this message forward. As His word is a reflection of who He is, then to effect the transmission of this message apart from man – whom He has

commissioned to do so – is to interfere in His own sovereign decree over the very process which He has ordained.

And this must take into consideration that not everyone who transmits this message has the same reason for doing so. Some will do it because of their love for God. Some will do it because of their love for money. Some desire to be famous. Some might simply use the gospel as a way to travel to exotic locations. Who knows... one may simply want to marry the preacher's daughter, and becoming a preacher is the surest way for that to happen.

Surprisingly, God has factored all of that into the transmission of His word to the people of the world. God, who is infinitely wise, and who is in complete control over all things, has done these things to bring Himself glory, and to bring restoration and fellowship to those who were once far off, but whom He has now brought near through the precious, purifying, and all-sufficient shed blood of Christ.

Closing Verse: *“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: ¹⁶ The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”*

-Philippians 1:14-18

THE TRINITY

2 Peter 1:16-21

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

When I first typed this sermon, I had a cheesy joke to begin us. You would have thought it was funny and laughed, but it would have also been the one thing that you remembered above the rest of the sermon.

That is why I don't include jokes in sermons. Nothing of real value is conveyed by them, and yet it is that one thing that will most stick in your memory. I know this is true because of all the great Adrian Rogers sermons that I listened to, the jokes he began his sermons with are what I still remember. That's actually rather sad.

While typing my commentary on 2 Peter 1:17, I decided that citing the substance of it would be a better use of our precious time. That verse says, "...for having received from God the Father honour and glory, such a voice being borne to him by the excellent glory:

'This is My Son -- the beloved, in whom I was well pleased;'" (YLT).

This verse, like the account of Jesus at His baptism, teaches us a lesson in the nature of God. Though the word translated as "borne" is a commonly used word, it is of note that it is the same word used in Acts 2:2 and which is translated as "a 'rushing' mighty wind." In other words, the Excellent Glory refers to the Holy Spirit who transmits the word of God from God the Father. He does it in written form through men of God (2 Peter 1:21 – where the same word is also used there), and He does it in open displays of glory, such

as on the Mount of Transfiguration and when He came to the people of Israel at Pentecost.

In this, it is seen that all three of the members of the Godhead were demonstrably present at that moment. Peter says the Source is God the Father. The Excellent Glory is the Holy Spirit conveying (bearing) the word, and Jesus, the beloved Son, is the recipient of the honor conveyed in that word.

It is a rather marvelous display of the workings of what we would call “the Trinity” as the members of the Godhead harmoniously interacted for us to more fully understand God’s nature.

This same basic proclamation was made upon Jesus twice during His ministry. The first time was at His baptism and is recorded in Matthew 3:16, 17 (also in Mark and Luke) –

“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

-Matthew 3:16, 17

The words of Peter in his epistle confirm that he and the others were eyewitnesses of the glory of Jesus Christ. Jesus told his apostles *“Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom”* (Matthew 16:28).

In all the three gospel accounts, the transfiguration immediately followed this statement, indicating that this is what Jesus was speaking of. The occurrence was like a note of deposit for the apostles to reflect on and stand by when times would get tough. Peter uses this to assure us that what he says is both true and reasonable.

There is a God, Peter calls Him the Father, but Peter also refers to the Son, and Peter speaks of the conveying of the Father’s word by the Excellent Glory – indicating that a third member is present and actively accomplishing a part of what is going on.

The Christian concept of God is that of a Trinity within the Godhead. There is, in fact, one God. The Bible – and indeed simple logic – tells us this. Despite that, the Bible also refers to God in a way which reveals that He is expressed in a Triune manner.

However, because the Bible never mentions the word “Trinity,” it is claimed that the idea of a Trinity is not reasonable. But such a statement is, by itself, unreasonable. A doctrine, idea, or concept may not be named in a text by using a particular word, but it does not mean that the concept is not fully fleshed-out in another way.

For example, you will not find the term “original sin” in the Bible. However, it is implicitly taught from the very first pages of Genesis all the way through to the final words of Revelation. It is also explicitly stated in another way in the 51st Psalm.

Likewise, the word “rapture” is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but it is a concept clearly taught there. The idea of the rapture first comes from a Greek word, *harpazó*, which signifies to be snatched up, suddenly and decisively.

This state of being snatched up suddenly is said by Paul to be an action accomplished by the Lord, and it is for the explicit purpose of changing the redeemed of the Lord from their earthly bodies to heavenly bodies.

In this action of being snatched up, there is a transformation from a state of mortality, pain, sorrow, and physical death to a state of immortality, health, joy, and eternal life – which is exactly what the word “rapture” implies.

Rapture means “intense pleasure or joy.” Therefore, the word does not translate *harpazó*, but it does explain what the *harpazó* initiates. The two are not synonymous; they are complementary.

This event, the rapture, is clearly laid out in exquisite detail by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and in 1 Thessalonians 4, and yet people skip over them as if they aren’t even written down, and their defense is to say, “The word ‘rapture’ is never mentioned in the Bible.”

We do these things because of our own faulty logic, we do them because of presuppositions, or we might do them because we want to show that we are more knowledgeable on a subject than others, even when we are not properly versed on it ourselves.

This is certainly true with the doctrine of the Trinity. If we want to deny – for whatever perverse reason – the nature of God as is revealed in Scripture, then we will use faulty logic to meet our goal. I say this because the Trinity is what Scripture reveals. Because it is, sound interpretation and proper logic will inevitably reveal the precept.

The same Bible that teaches that there is one God, that there is original sin, and that the rapture really will happen, also gives us insight and revelation concerning the doctrine of the Trinity.

Text Verse: *“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the **Spirit** of grace and supplication; then they will look on **Me** whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for **Him** as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for **Him** as one grieves for a firstborn.” Zechariah 12:10*

For those who deny the Trinity, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Zechariah 12:10 is such a problematic verse that a literal reading is simply ignored, and a margin note is inserted into it instead.

The Lord, who is clearly presented as the One and only God in Scripture, is speaking in the passage. He says that He will pour out the *ruakh*, or Spirit upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Without the rest of Scripture, the meaning of *ruakh* could be debated if it is referring to the Holy Spirit or a general spirit.

Scripture elsewhere, however, does answer what is being referred to – meaning the Holy Spirit. After that, the Hebrew says, *v’hibitu elay eth asher daqaru* – and they will look on Me whom they pierced.” However, God is Spirit. And so, apart from accepting the Trinity, this makes no sense.

Because of this, a margin note, citing variant readings of the verse, is used by disbelieving Jews, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and others in their translations, thus changing the text to read “and they will look to the one whom they pierced.” That safely allows them to continue on in their otherwise incorrect and incoherent theology.

This is all the more so because the verse immediately goes from the first person common singular, Me, to third person masculine singular, Him, twice. The obviously correct reading is “Me” rather than “Him,” or “the one.” The reason for this is that the very difficulty of the use of “Me” sets it apart as otherwise impossible unless it was truly inspired.

In other words, the reading is so obvious as to what it proclaims that it would be impossible to accept unless it was exactly what God intended.

However, because there is a variant reading, the doctrine can be dismissed as an aberration – unless all of Scripture is laid out and analyzed in order to come to a final resolution of what is being conveyed to us concerning the nature of God.

Obviously, all of Scripture cannot be analyzed in a short sermon, but we can at least get a reasonable grounding in what Scripture says concerning this precept. And we will attempt to do just that. The mystery of the Trinity is, in fact, revealed in God's precious and sacred word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Monotheism – One God

Malik Jabbar says –

“All of the monotheistic religions, which primarily include Islam, Christianity and Judaism are mythological representations of the natural environment. The ancients fashioned their spiritual concepts as mythical copies of natural phenomena, the environment and its interactions. They pictured the sun as the ruler of the universe, the life giver, the conqueror of darkness and cold, the scorcher with its *intense* fire, the compassionate with its *soothing* heat. When the sun triumphantly appeared on the eastern horizon at the dawning of the day, the whole universe (from our earthly perspective) was seen bowing in submission to the greatest of all lights. All the stars and planets of the higher and lower heavens were vanquished without trace at the dawning of the great sun god. This physical reality is the true seminal generator of our religious rituals in reference to an omnipotent conquering god, evolved from the customs of the ancients”.

What Jabbar says here is both an irrational and an incoherent attempt to explain away monotheism. If man were to make a religion based on natural phenomena, which has happened innumerable times, he would certainly not be a monotheist. The sun would be one of many gods, and this is what has occurred as religion has devolved throughout the ages.

In the 19th psalm David skips over the created god Jabbar proclaims and exalts the God who created the very sun who was supposedly the object of reverence in his confused analysis.

“The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.” ...

“In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun.” Psalm 19:1 & 4

David understood that the Creator is above, not subservient to, or part of, His creation.

However, liberal theologians have twisted the evolution of religion, turning it completely upside down. It is evident from the historical record in the worship of God by man that the most ancient belief is that of monotheism. From that point, worship has devolved into polytheism, animism, etc., not the other way around. Assyriologist Stephen Langdon says –

“The history of Sumerian religion, which was the most powerful cultural influence in the ancient world, could be traced by means of pictographic inscriptions almost to the earliest religious concepts of man. The evidence points unmistakably to an original monotheism, the inscriptions and literary remains of the oldest Semitic peoples also indicate a primitive monotheism, and the totemistic origin of Hebrew and other Semitic religions is now entirely discredited.” Stephen Langdon

The region of Sumeria, which Langdon cites, is where many of the early Bible figures find their homes. And it is the record of these early people, by those who descended from them, who have given us the pages of the Bible as breathed out by the One true God.

From the first page of the Bible to its last, the idea that there is One and only One true God is proclaimed. And this goes in both directions, meaning from the top-down and from the bottom up.

God speaking to man –

“For thus says the Lord,
Who created the heavens,
Who is God,
Who formed the earth and made it,
Who has established it,
Who did not create it in vain,
Who formed it to be inhabited:
“I am the Lord, and there is no other.” Isaiah 45:18

In the book of Isaiah alone, this claim is explicitly made almost a dozen times.

Man speaking to God –

“For You are great, and do wondrous things;
You alone are God.” Psalm 86:10

Yes, the Bible proclaims that there is one God. But reason and intellect tell us this as well. We can know it is true by simply thinking things through in a rational manner. Of the twelve First Principles, points 8, 9, and 10 reveal this.

First, point 8 states that a Necessary Being Cannot Cause A Necessary Being. In other words, if there is a God, there can only be one God. This is known as the Negative Principle of Modality. It is undeniable. Only one Necessary Being can exist. Any being which exists apart from a Necessary Being is contingent and could simply Not exist. It is not “necessary.” This is self-evident.

Point 9 then says that Every Contingent Being Is Caused by a Necessary Being. This is known as the Principle of Existential Causality. The fact that there are contingent beings necessitates that a Necessary Being (God) exists. We exist, therefore a Being that cannot Not exist must exist. The principle is undeniable in and of itself.

And, point 10 then concludes that a Necessary Being Exists. This is the Principle of Existential Necessity. Contingent beings exist (such as you and I); therefore, a Necessary Being must exist. The principle is reducible to the undeniable.

We did not need the Bible to come to those conclusions. And yet, we logically came to those conclusions. The Bible does not argue the existence of God. It proclaims that He is. It is our responsibility to contemplate this God and to logically and rationally consider if what it presents is true or not.

I say this because other texts, such as the Koran, also proclaim that there is a “god.” But does what the Koran teach about God reflect the truth of God. If so, then we should all become Muslims? If not, then Muslims are following a false god. How can you know unless you think these things through?

The Koran teaches that God is a monad, a single God who is not part of a Godhead. But how could a being that didn’t understand fellowship create anything beyond Himself which fellowships? He would be completely contained within Himself. The twelfth First Principle, the Principle of Analogy states that “The cause of being cannot produce what it does not possess.”

If God does not possess – and thus understand – fellowship, He could not create that which fellowships. The principle is undeniable, and the precept which comes from the principle is irrefutable. Because of this, the mere fact that we are social beings confirms a plurality within a single essence such as the Trinity.

As a demonstration of the soundness of the doctrine, early church fathers, even before the compilation of the various books of the Bible, taught the doctrine of the Trinity in their writings. They didn't just pull this out of the wind. Rather, it was handed down to them directly from the Apostles.

Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, was a personal disciple of John the Apostle. In other words, he knew John and learned directly at his feet. He wrote –

“O Lord God almighty... I bless you and glorify you through the eternal and heavenly high priest Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom be glory to you, with Him and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever.” Polycarp

What he wrote was from a clear understanding of the specific roles within the Godhead. Tertullian, who lived during the second and third century, was an African apologist and theologian. He wrote a great deal in defense of Christianity, including on the doctrine of the Trinity –

“We define that there are two, the Father and the Son, and three with the Holy Spirit, and this number is made by the pattern of salvation... [which] brings about unity in trinity, interrelating the three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are three, not in dignity, but in degree, not in substance but in form, not in power but in kind. They are of one substance and power, because there is one God from whom these degrees, forms and kinds devolve in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” (Tertullian)
Such writings are not easily dismissed, because these people were right there at the beginning of the Christian faith. It is true that there were many heresies early on as well, and so even early writings have to be analyzed in light of Scripture itself. It is through Scripture that we find the final authority for the teaching of Trinitarianism.

As Scripture reveals only one God, and yet Scripture reveals a Trinity within the Godhead, then true Christians are Trinitarian monotheists.

Unfortunately, the idea of the Trinity is so dismissed by cults, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, that they are trained to claim that what mainstream Christians believe is actually a Triad within a godhead, not a Trinity within the Godhead. But this is certainly

not the case. The difference between a Triad and the Trinity is the difference between the finite and the infinite.

A Triad speaks of three “gods,” a logical impossibility. The Trinity speaks of One God, in three Persons – which is what the Bible proclaims. There is a fullness to God which Scripture then reveals – not of two or four or ten Persons, but three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As the Bible is God’s revelation of Himself, and as it is the rule and guide of proper faith, we would be ignorant at best, and found false teachers as well, should we deny what it proclaims.

But this doesn’t mean it is an easy concept to understand. Scholars have struggled with it all along, and we continue to do so. John Wesley said, “Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the Triune God.”

This may be true to some extent, but just because we cannot fully comprehend the Triune God, it does not mean that we cannot at least explain *how* He can be Triune, and what the aspects of each member of the Godhead will be like.

*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts
He is glorious and almighty
To Him we give our praises, and in Him are found our boasts
Now and forevermore, there before the glassy sea*

*In Him is all majesty and all power
In Him is all glory, now and forevermore
For all eternity and from this very hour
Our God we shall praise, for it is He our hearts adore*

*Holy is the Lord our God, yes holy is He
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit whom we adore
And so, to Him we trod, to the shores of that glassy sea
Where we shall behold His glory forevermore*

II. One God in Three Persons – The Trinity

The Trinity is hinted at throughout the Bible – Old Testament and New. However, it remained a mystery long hidden at God's prerogative. It wasn't until the coming of Christ that the mystery of this profound secret was finally and fully revealed. As Paul says as he closes out the book of Romans –

“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.” Romans 16:25-27

As already noted, the doctrine of the Trinity states that God is threefold in Person and yet they together are one God – three Persons in one Essence. The term “persons” comes from the writings of Augustine who agreed that it wasn't the best of terms but, as he said, “rather than being silent on the subject...”

The reason he said this is because he could not be silent on the subject. Scripture is not, and – therefore – the Christian cannot be. This Trinity as revealed throughout Scripture is:

God the Father God the Son God the Holy Spirit

In the Bible, at one time or another, each of these Persons is referred to either implicitly or explicitly as God. He has the attributes of God, accomplishes that which belongs to God, and so on. And yet, each is spoken of as an individual Person. As this is so, then there are individual Persons, three being identified, who make up the Godhead.

For example, each is stated as being involved in the act of creation; He is the Creator. Each is referred to as being eternal. Both Jesus and the Spirit are said to search out the heart and mind, but that is what God in the Old Testament is said to do. Etc.

Other such things as these, time and again, are attributed to the Lord God in the Old Testament, and yet they are things which are spoken of as being attributed to the Father, to the Son, and/or to the Holy Spirit in the New.

Either the Bible is filled with confusion, or each of these is God. When Jesus uttered the Great Commission to his apostles, he said the following:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19

In the Greek, the word “name” is *onoma*. It is a singular noun. This means that the three – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – are spoken of as one essence. Is this an aberration? It is something completely unique to the New Testament? Or, can we find parallels even in the Old? No, No, and Yes.

For example, Deuteronomy 6:4, is known as the *Shema*, or “Hear.” It is the Hebrew statement of faith which is faithfully repeated thousands of times a day by observant Jews ever since it was given to Moses 3500 years ago –

Shema Yisrael Yehovah Elohaynu Yehovah ekhad
“Hear, O Israel: Yehovah our God, Yehovah is one!”

In this, it says “The Lord (Yehovah) *is* One.” A cluster of grapes is one; the people Israel are one people. Both of these are made up of individual parts and yet are termed “one.”

The word *ekhad* used in the *Shema* allows for this interpretation. There is another word which means one and only one – *yakhid*. It was used, for example, when speaking of Abraham’s one and only son, Isaac. It is remarkable, but not unexpected that *ekhad*, rather than *yakhid*, was used in the *Shema*, because the Bible elsewhere reveals that the Godhead is a plurality within a single essence.

But even though Scripture reveals this Godhead, is there any way of accurately describing it without being utterly incorrect in our thinking? A friend of mine said that the more you continue to talk about the Trinity, the more likely you are to devolve into heresy. That is certainly true. Eventually, words can no longer explain every detail of what God is like, and we run off into error.

But that does not mean we cannot form a basic concept of the Trinity which, at least partially, reveals it without being incorrect. And yet, we have to be careful in attempting to do so.

Throughout the ages, people have used tangible concepts to try to explain this Trinity. One is to equate it to water which can be steam, liquid, or solid. Another is to take a circle and divide it into three equal parts. The egg has been used because it has a shell, a yolk, and the white. But, none of these accurately portrays the concept. In fact, if used they lead to heresy.

So, is there is no proper analogy? Has God left us with a concept in Scripture, but no way to rightly contemplate it or explain it? Interestingly, a concept has been provided, and it is visible everywhere you look. It is beautifully explained by Dr. Nathan Wood in the book The Secret of the Universe. I cited it in a sermon from Numbers 6, but it is useful and proper to cite again here.

He explains that the universe is made of a trinity of Space, Time, and Matter. Further, each of these is a trinity itself. Space is comprised of Length, Breadth, and Height. Time is expressed in Past, Present, and Future. And matter consists of Energy in Motion producing Phenomena. The universe itself is a trinity of trinities.

But more, we can equate Space with the Father – unseen and yet omnipresent; matter with the Son – visible, tangible, understandable; and Time with the Spirit – which is unseen and yet it is a medium in which we move and gain understanding.

From that, Dr. Wood further defines a trinity using Time as his primary example. He breaks it down into an understandable concept. After doing this, he changes only four words and thereby accurately explains the mystery of the Trinity as revealed in Scripture–

The Future is the source. The Future is unseen, unknown, except as it continually embodies itself and makes itself visible in the Present. The Present is what we see, and hear, and know. It is ceaselessly embodying the Future, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. It is perpetually revealing the Future, hitherto invisible.

The Future is logically first, but not chronologically. For the Present exists as long as Time exists, and was in the absolute beginning of Time. The Present has existed as long as Time has existed. Time acts through and in the Present. It makes itself visible only in the Present. The Future acts, and reveals itself through the Present. It is through the Present that Time, that the Future, enters into union with human life. Time and humanity meet and unite in the Present. It is in the Present that Time, that the Future, becomes a part of human life, and so is born and lives and dies in human life.

The Past in turn comes from the Present. We cannot say that it embodies the Present. On the contrary Time in issuing from the Present into the Past becomes invisible again. The Past does not embody the Present. Rather it proceeds silently, endlessly, invisibly from it.

But the Present is not the source of the Past which proceeds from it. The Future is the source of both the Present and the Past. The Past issues in endless, invisible procession from the Present, but, back of that, from the Future out of which the Present comes.

The Past issues, it proceeds, from the Future, through the Present.

The Present therefore comes out from the invisible Future. The Present perpetually and ever-newly embodies the Future in visible, audible, livable form; and returns again into invisible Time in the Past. The Past acts invisibly. It continually influences us with regard to the Present. It casts light upon the Present. That is its great function. It helps us to live in the Present which we know, and with reference to the Future which we expect to see.

Dr Wood next substitutes Time with God, Future with Father, Present with Son, and Past with Spirit. And the result is –

The Father is the source. The Father is unseen, unknown, except as He continually embodies Himself and makes Himself visible in the Son. The Son is what we see, and hear, and know. He is ceaselessly embodying the Father, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. He is perpetually revealing the Father, hitherto invisible.

The Father is logically first, but not chronologically. For the Son exists as long as God exists, and was in the absolute beginning of God. The Son has existed as long as God has existed. God acts through and in the Son. The Father makes Himself visible only in the Son. The Father acts, and reveals Himself through the Son. It is through the Son that God, that the Father, enters into union with human life, and so is born and lives and dies in human life. God and humanity meet and unite in the Son. It is in the Son that God, that the Father, becomes a part of human life, and so is born and lives and dies in human life.

The Spirit in turn comes from the Son. We cannot say that it embodies the Son. On the contrary the Spirit in issuing from the Son into the Spirit becomes invisible again. The Spirit does not embody the Son. Rather it proceeds silently, endlessly, invisibly from Him.

But the Son is not the source of the Spirit who proceeds from Him. The Father is the source of both the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit issues in endless, invisible procession from the Son, but back of that, from the Father out of whom the Son comes.

The Spirit issues, He proceeds, from the Father, through the Son.

The Son therefore comes out from the invisible Father. The Son perpetually and ever-newly embodies the Father in visible, audible, livable form; and returns again into invisible God in the Spirit. The Spirit acts invisibly. It continually influences us with regard to the Son. It casts light upon the Son. That is His great function. He helps us to live in the Son which we know, and with reference to the Father which we expect to see.

And that is just what has been evident since creation in the physical universe and to which the Bible faithfully testifies to concerning the nature of the Godhead. Examples from the Bible –

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” Genesis 1:26

Right in the first chapter of Scripture the terms “Us” and “Our” are used by the Creator reflecting His triune nature. Again, in Isaiah –

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
“Whom shall I send,
And who will go for Us?”
Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Isaiah 6:8

As we saw in our text verse, Chapter 12 of Zechariah, still Old Testament, places all three members of the Trinity together in one passage. The Gospel of John, time and again, reflects the relationship between the Father and the Son as well as the Spirit –

Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”
⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? John 14:8, 9

And again, in John 16 –

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” John 16:7-11

Next, Paul shows that he clearly understood God's triune nature. He alludes to it here and elsewhere many times in his epistles –

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” 2 Corinthians 13:14

And again in 1 Timothy 6:13-16 he writes –

“I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”

Who is Paul speaking about when he says that “God gives life to all things?” God obviously. But in Job 33, John 6, Romans 8, and 2 Corinthians 3, it is said that the Spirit gives life.

And who is Paul speaking of when he says, “the King of kings and Lord of lords?” It must be the Lord God, and yet it is the same title which John uses when referring to Jesus in Revelation 19:16. We could go on and on in this, but – instead – we will go on...

*Oh God! You are our Father, and we are your children
You brought us forth for Your honor and glory
You have brought forth all the sons of men
We have become a part of Your redemption story*

*It is You who begat us, and to You we lift our praise
It is You who created so that we came forth to You
It is we who turned away, for seemingly endless days
But You never abandoned us; You are ever faithful and true*

*And so, O God our Father, bring us back to You
Turn our hearts to You so that we are right again
Lead us on paths that are righteous and true
Look with favor on Your wayward children*

III. The First Member – God the Father

God the Father is clearly acknowledged by all Christians as well as most cults and sects who use the Bible as their reference. An unfortunate exception of course has come out of modern liberal denominations with songs and hymns which have purposed a gender-neutral God. Such perversity has taken over many major denominations –

Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above the Heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Good and proper)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. (Bad and contemptible)

This gender-neutral trend is not how God has revealed Himself, nor shall we. Regardless of such depravity, the texts as received from God for our Bible are in the masculine and for that reason, we adapt political correctness in this matter at our own peril. God's word stands though. Concerning God the Father we read –

“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?” Malachi 2:10

“Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.” John 6:46

This verse from John 6, plus those from both John 14 and John 16 which I read earlier, perfectly match the description Dr. Wood made concerning the nature of the Trinity. God is One, and within the Godhead, there is the Person and the role of the Father.

*Who is like the Son of God that came from above?
Who can compare in splendid majesty?
Where can be found the depth of His love?
When God reveals Himself as such, how can it be?*

*Great are You O God, who came from the eternal realm
And who for fallen men stepped out of eternity
We behold Jesus, our Captain! He at the helm*

And He is taking us to His place of victory

Hail the Son who died upon the cross!

Hail the One who died upon Calvary!

In Him is the triumph – to the devil only loss

For in Christ Jesus is God's perfect victory

IV. The Second Member – God the Son

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” John 1:1-5

This could not have been stated any more clearly concerning the nature of the Word, meaning the Son, and His eternal relationship with God. And yet, people perversely twist something so clear and so concise in order to deny the truth of the very words so meticulously penned by John under inspiration of the Spirit.

In his first epistle, John follows the exact same pattern concerning the Word. These verses, along with everything else John writes, are so absolutely clear concerning the deity of Jesus that it is without excuse to misunderstand or deny what he is saying –

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.” 1 John 1:1, 2

Later in Revelation, John quotes Jesus' own words – His own claim to deity. If the resurrection didn't prove it to us, He clarifies it to us out of His own mouth –

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” Revelation 22:13

Of course, that is not Jesus' only claim to eternity, and thus deity. There are many examples of it. However, we have to be careful that we only use that which is intended

to be used in this way. The next verse speaks of Jesus' eternity, but maybe not the way you have thought, or been taught –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” John 8:58

If you have heard that the words here, translated as “I AM” prove Jesus was claiming to be God, it is not that simple. The Greek reads *ego eimi*. However, if you go to the very next chapter, the same words are used by the man Jesus healed –

“Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, ‘Is not this he who sat and begged?’

⁹ Some said, ‘This is he.’ Others said, ‘He is like him.’

He said, ‘**I am** he.’” John 9:8, 9

In this exchange, the man states *ego eimi* just as Jesus did. He clearly wasn't claiming to be God, so we need to be careful to not swallow the wrong colored pill.

The claim of deity in John 8 is evident from the construct of the verse – “Before Abraham was.” Jesus was saying that *He is* before *Abraham was*. Thus, He preceded Abraham and must be God. It is also evident from the actions of the people based on the Hebrew or Aramaic Jesus would have spoken, not necessarily the Greek used in the translation. How do we know this?

“Then they took up stones to throw at Him;” John 8:59

The very fact that they picked up stones to throw at Him testifies that He had claimed an existence which only belonged to Yehovah. Thus, He was being accused of blasphemy, for which stoning was the penalty. And again, this next verse leaves no doubt –

“‘I and My Father are one.’ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.”

-John 10:31

Here, it is both what Jesus said and the reaction of the people that assure us that Jesus was claiming deity. Luke had no doubt of Christ's deity. Listen to how carefully he worded the following which is a pattern seen throughout his writings –

“Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return to your own house, and

tell what great things **God** has done for you.” And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things **Jesus** had done for him.”

-Luke 8:38, 39

Either Luke was making a point for us to read and understand, or he was an incompetent blasphemer. Next, Paul completely supports the deity and Godhood of Christ Jesus –

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” Colossians 1:15-17

In these verses, the JW’s NWT adds in the word “other” before the word “created” in both verses 16 and 17 – “He created all *other* things.” The word cannot even be inferred from the context, but more, it is incomprehensible and illogical to think that a created being could somehow “create all things,” or “all other things.”

The sixth First Principle, that of Contingency (or Dependency) disallows it. It says that “Contingent Being Cannot Cause Contingent Being.” This would lead to an infinite regress of causes which is disproved by Relativity.

Time, Space, and Matter came into existence simultaneously. The existence of each is dependent on the existence of all. And all are dependent on both a Creator and a Sustainer. The principle is undeniable. A contingent, or created being, cannot create or sustain anything else because it is already contingent.

In theology, 1+1 always equals 2, and Jesus is the eternal God. The writer of Hebrews makes the same claim as Paul concerning God’s sustaining power for the entire universe as being held in the Person of Christ Jesus –

“The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.” Hebrews 1:3

No matter what else, the deity of Jesus Christ is not only fully supportable by the text of the Bible, but it is the only logical and reasonable conclusion that we can come to. It is through Jesus that the Eternal God reveals Himself to us. And it is the Holy Spirit who will, if we allow Him, teach us the proper doctrine concerning the nature of God. This, through the word He breathed out to us.

*By the Spirit I search out the things of God
Things gloriously breathed out for us to search and see
For all the days upon this earth as I trod
I shall seek my God as His Spirit lovingly guides me*

*It is the word He has given, through men selected O so carefully
That I can see what God has done, even for one such as me
The words are given, and they are presented so beautifully
Marvelous things are hidden there for us to search and see*

*Give us wisdom in Your word, O God
Help us find those things hidden away so secretly
Open the treasures of Your word as in this life we trod
May Your Spirit guide us as we search to see*

V. The Third Member – God the Holy Spirit

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

-John 3:6-8

In the Bible, the work of “begetting” sons is the job of the Father, but it is also the work of the Spirit. To attribute this to the Spirit, were it not the case, would be blasphemous.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses call the Spirit an “active force” – whatever that means. They have to make up a term for the Spirit which is completely unsupportable in order to diminish His proper role as the third member of the Godhead. But the Spirit is the One who searches the Godhead and reveals to us God’s workings –

“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

-1 Corinthians 2:11

Next, Paul – after talking about Christ (the Lord) – does a change-up and says in practically in the same breath...

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

-2 Corinthians 3:17

Either Paul is completely confused theologically, or He is as clear as a crystal in his claim – Christ is the Lord, the Spirit is the Lord, and the Spirit is the “Spirit of the Lord.”

Numerous other examples of the workings of God the Spirit are found in both testaments of Scripture. They identify Him either implicitly or explicitly as God. Thus, the Bible reveals that there is one Godhead which then is expressed in three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each is God, but each expresses God to us in a different and yet understandable way.

As we finish today, please remember a few things. The first is that the Bible both implicitly and explicitly shows that each of these three Persons is God. As the Bible also says that there is only one God, then it must be that there is a Godhead comprised of them.

Secondly, just because we don’t fully understand a thing, it does not mean that such a thing does not exist. I don’t fully understand my wife, but I am quite certain she exists. It is illogical to make a claim that the Trinity is not possible simply because we cannot perfectly explain every point concerning it.

If you think it through, there is nothing that we can fully explain, even the composition of a single atom. We can explain it to some extent, but the further we look into it, we eventually break down in our ability to define all that comprises that one, single atom.

Third, as you heard today, there is a logical and acceptable model for the Trinity that we subsist in at every moment of our existence, Time. As this is so, and as it adequately reflects the Trinitarian model, we are not left completely excluded from understanding a principle that the Bible proclaims as true, but which is otherwise very complicated.

And fourth, a monad God has been proven impossible by simple logic as revealed in the First Principles. As a monad is not true, then a multiplicity within the Godhead must be true. That multiplicity is defined in the God of Scripture as not being 2, 5, 17, or 120, but 3 – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Such is God, and such is how we are to accept this revelation of Himself to us.

Surely, we praise our Creator – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! May you be blessed as you read the Word in the future, observing and accepting the Trinity.

Closing Verse: *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!” Isaiah 6:3*

JESUS CHRIST, THE GOD-MAN PART I HIS HUMANITY

1 John 1:1-4

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ²the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

There are a host of views concerning the nature of the Person of Jesus Christ. Scholarly, and quite unscholarly, comments go back to the beginning of the Christian faith, and they go in every possible direction one could conceivably imagine.

It would be impossible to even touch upon every point of doctrine that has been developed over the centuries, and there really is no need to do so for a series on basic doctrine. What needs to be understood about Christ Jesus is that He is fully God, and that He is also fully Man.

Any departure from those two principle points is, by default, heretical. But how one gets to those points can also be a source of either very poor doctrine or even heresy. Care needs to be taken to explain these things without going off on a bad path.

As far as His humanity, there is no scriptural doubt about it. By the words of the prophets, by the typological pictures which anticipate Him, by His own words, and by the words of the apostles who came after Him, the humanity of Jesus Christ is an undeniable point of biblical doctrine.

But to make sure that we understand the nature of that manhood, we need to at least make a short review of Scripture, and then look over one or two views which are contrary to what is sound. Often, evaluating that which is incorrect can lead us to more rightly see what is correct.

In this sermon, as in other sermons to come, we will evaluate the doctrine of others, including some who are still alive today. To determine what is correct, one should

determine what is error. To this day, we speak of the Arian heresy. That was named because of the unsound doctrine of someone named Arius.

Just because someone is alive, it does not mean that their doctrine cannot be called out. In fact, the opposite is true. Paul called out unsound teachers by name, such as in 2 Timothy 2:17. If I teach poor doctrine, or even heresy, that should be noted. If someone is going to step up to the pulpit, that person is – by default – expected to teach what is orthodox.

Text Verse: *“He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” Isaiah 53:3*

The Messiah was anticipated. What His role and work detailed was certainly debated, but Israel knew one thing for certain – He would be a human being. Andrew understood this and he excitedly proclaimed it to his brother, Simon Peter –

“He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.”
-John 1:41

Even people not of Israel knew this would be the case. We learned this from a woman of Samaria –

“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ).
‘When He comes, He will tell us all things.’” John 4:25

There was no question in anyone’s mind at the time that the coming Messiah, or Christ, would be a human being. Scripture was clear, and the genealogies were perfectly understood that it was so. What the purpose of Christ’s humanity served is a different subject and for a different time.

The fact that He is a human, and how that came to be, is what needs to be detailed here today. It is a marvelous truth which is revealed in His Superior Word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Jesus Christ – A Body Prepared

Isaiah 9:6 says, “For unto us a Child is born.” It is a confirmation of what was already anticipated, even since moments after the fall of man. A human being was promised who would be born into the world, and He would be unlike all other human beings. But He would, in fact, be a human being. The word was prophesied by the Lord to the serpent who had led humanity into the sin of disobedience –

“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15

The Lord God promised that One would come who would bruise the head of the serpent. From the details of Genesis 4, it is evident that Eve understood exactly what was meant. The naming of her first son Cain, and the exclamation she made concerning him, reveals that truth – *qaniti ish eth Yehovah* – “I have acquired a man with Yehovah.”

She anticipated that her child would be the One to take on the serpent and lead her back to the Garden of Delight that she had been expelled from. That is not a dubious inference, but rather it is a proclamation based on one thing alone – the promise spoken in Genesis 3:15 – Messiah would be the Seed of the woman.

At this point in the biblical narrative, all we know is that this One will be the Seed of the woman. Thus, as she rightly deduced, He would come from her, the mother of all living. Therefore, He would be a human being. Nothing else is yet explicit. However, the curious use of the words, her Seed, do leave unanswered questions.

The reason for this is that the Bible consistently speaks of the seed of man. It is through man that generations are noted and spoken of. The genealogical listings consistently refer to children being begotten of a father, and when a woman is introduced into a record, it is to clarify a matter, or resolve some sort of dilemma.

For example, the daughters of Zelophehad are referred to several times in the book of Numbers, and in Joshua and 1 Chronicles as well. In fact, great detail is given concerning them, but it is specifically because they are daughters of a man without sons that the specificity is given.

It is the line, or seed, of the male – and that alone – that bears the importance of the generational promises and inheritances. And so, to speak of the Seed of the woman should at least cause the reader to stop and ponder why the statement was given. One could not, until after the coming of Messiah, deduce the full import or implication of the term at this point.

For now, the Bible is focusing on His human nature – He will come from a human being, regardless of any other characteristics. Indeed, unto us a Child is born.

From this point, the fact that this One will be the Seed of the woman is carefully tucked away, as if a precious jewel which needs to be protected and cared for until it is needed again some future day when God so determines it.

In its place, or rather maybe, from a different perspective, the narrative now goes solely to the seed of man. With many stories interspersed throughout the narrative, it is the generations of Adam, the first man, that are highlighted. Genesis 5 gives the first notable genealogy – Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah.

They are ten names which detail the progression of the generations of man, from man to man. They state that one begets the next and then so on down the line. No women are listed, though some are incidentally mentioned for specific purposes, but which are not especially related to the genealogical records.

After Noah, the pattern continues. There is one main line which continues to feed the hungry belly of time, filling it up with one generation after another. Eventually, the line leads to the family of Abraham, of which a lot of detail is provided, and many names are mentioned.

At times, women are included in the narrative by name, such as Sarah and Rebekah. At others, they are referred to by family, such as the two daughters of Lot. But the focus of the lines is based on the male throughout the narrative, even if the lines of those people – including the women, such as the daughters of Lot – lead to the anticipated Messiah.

It is important, however, to stop with Abraham, and to highlight one of the chief aspects of his walk before the Lord in order to understand more about this coming Seed of the woman. God, in Genesis 17, says to Abraham –

“As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹²He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” Genesis 17:8-14

The lines of man have been highlighted, and the Seed of the woman has also been referred to. But now, something new is introduced. The male organ, from which issues the seed of the man, is minutely discussed here and elsewhere from this point on.

One who is astute will at least question, “Why?” Couldn’t God have said to Abraham that he and his descendants should wear a certain hairstyle? Maybe shave their heads completely? Or, maybe wear a beard but no mustache? Couldn’t they have had a specific body mark, such as a tattoo or cutting in a conspicuous place?

Such things are found in cultures throughout the world. In fact, later in the narrative, there will be a group identified by their necks, the Anakim, first mentioned in Numbers 13. Either they have long necks, or they ornamented their necks in some obvious way, but they had a family identifier which was readily viewable to all.

However, Abraham has one that is secreted away, and it is also one which involves the very spot of the transmission of what begets humans from one generation to the next. Indeed, a connection is being made for us to ponder and contemplate.

From Abraham, the genealogical listings continue, but those which are especially highlighted are those which descend from a son of promise, Isaac, and not from a son who came in the natural way, Ishmael and other sons of Abraham.

Abraham’s many sons are listed, and at times the sons of their sons are listed as well, but these are branches off the main trunk. The main line is Isaac. And from Isaac comes Esau and Jacob. But Jacob quickly becomes the main line of note, and Esau is easily understood to be another branch.

But then, interestingly, all twelve of Jacob's sons are highlighted as a single unit, with two more added through adoption. However, from this large assembly, hints begin to develop early on that one of these lines is of special import, Judah.

Several stories clue us into this. Eventually, it becomes perfectly obvious. By the time of David, it can be taken as an axiom that those early stories and prophecies were pointing – once again – to one particular and special listing of the generations of men.

And with the coming of David, it becomes obvious that the line, which is minutely and exactly being detailed, is to specifically continue through him. The line of man is being highlighted, but a particular line of man is granted special note as it winds through the corridor of unfolding time.

And during this process of unfolding, promises are made which speak of a Man who is anticipated to come. Sometimes these promises, or prophecies, are veiled. Sometimes they are specific, even if the object of them is as of yet unknown.

Jacob speaks of the scepter and of Shiloh, Balaam speaks of one in the distant future who would be the Star out of Jacob and the Scepter out of Israel. The Lord spoke to David concerning the establishment of an everlasting throne and kingdom which would come from him.

And then the Psalms open up revelations, time and again, of One – a human being – who would be the fulfillment of all of the promises which had been made. Page after page of the psalms introduce new insights about Him. Quite often these could only be fully understood after His coming, but many were known to be Messianic all along.

There is enough to know that He is coming, but not enough to be definitive about who He would be, when He would come, and so on. But the overall and most evident aspect of Him is that He would be a Man. Unto us a Child is born. Humanity would clothe Him, and His garments would not be unlike our own.

And of course, the prophets also chimed in, time and again, concerning this exceptional Man to come. Micah even fills in the information that Isaiah leaves out concerning the birth of this anticipated Child –

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,

Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel.” Micah 5:2

Bethlehem is a place. It is a part of creation. It is a fixed and definite spot. But it is not just a location, like a lake or a mountain. And it is not a spot for particular animals. For example, in the Bible, there is a place called En Gedi. That means “Fountain of a Goat.” It then speaks of a place where goats are seen.

Bethlehem is a place of people. It is a city inhabited by human beings. The implication is that the anticipated Ruler would be a human as well. One plus one equals two. Nobody who reads those words from Micah would think otherwise. If He comes from a created place, and if He comes from the created people of that place, then He is a human being.

This Person would be from the city of Bethlehem, and He would be from the tribe of Judah. Judah descends from Jacob, Jacob descends from Isaac, and Isaac descends from Abraham. From there, the genealogies which have been carefully recorded go right back to Adam. Do you see how logical and orderly it all is?

Human beings beget human beings, and, therefore, this will be a Man who comes from human beings. The male line is carefully recorded for us to see this. If there is more to this Man than meets the eye, it does not negate that He will be a Man descended from humanity.

So obvious was the prophecy concerning this coming One in Micah, that when Herod the king heard the news that the King of the Jews had been born, he went to the chief priests and scribes and asked where He was to be born... this Christ; this Messiah.

Their answer was clear and precise. They simply cited Micah and told him that it would be Bethlehem. A human being, from a city of human beings, had been prophesied to come and rule.

We could go on and on, with prophecy after prophecy, clearly demonstrating that the Messiah would come into the stream of humanity as a human being, being begotten from human beings.

To state otherwise would not only violate every aspect of Scripture from Genesis to Matthew and then beyond, it would deny the very purpose of the sacrificial system of Israel which anticipated – in the minutest detail – of the need for blood atonement of a like-kind of being.

That isn't perfectly obvious until the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, but it is as clear as can be when detailed there. Based on this, to state that this coming Messiah is either not a human being, or that He did not come through the line of humanity – from Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah and then later through Abraham by Sarah, Lot via both of his daughters, Isaac, Jacob, Judah via his daughter Tamar, Boaz through his mother Rahab the harlot, David through his wife Bathsheba, and so on down the line – yes from all of these and so many others faithfully recorded in Scripture – to state that He did not come through them, then, you are not just dealing with faulty doctrine, you are dealing with heresy. It is a fundamental denial of the genealogical humanity of the coming Messiah.

However, the world is full of heretics, and of those who deny this fundamental basis for the coming Messiah. One of these heresies is Docetism. This doctrine states that the occurrence of the coming of Jesus, His historical and bodily existence – and in particular His human form – was only a semblance without any true reality.

The heretic Marcion held to such a belief. He dismissed the advent of Christ as being the Jewish Messiah. To Him, Jesus was rather a spiritual entity. He viewed Christ as so Divine, that He could not have been human. Such views deny what is both logically and Scripturally necessary concerning the humanity of Jesus.

On the other side is Arianism, or its modern equivalent, the heretical doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses. They state that Jesus was a created being and not God. The deity of the God-Man Jesus will be addressed, and this heresy will be refuted then.

There are many odd and heretical teachings between the two as well. For example, there are those who may agree that He is a human, and yet they deny that He was born into humanity. For example, let us take this quote from the sermon "The Two Adams" by Jacob Prasch and see if you can detail his errors –

“As far as God is concerned, there’s only two men who have ever existed, Adam and Yeshua. The first Adam and the second Adam. Everybody is either part of the first Adam, or part of the second Adam. Adam and Yeshua were both created by Ha’Shem by God directly and personally. And they were both created without sin. They did not have a fallen nature.” Jacob Prasch

I don’t know if he still teaches this or not. I don’t listen to other preachers unless someone tells me what they have said, and they want clarification on whether it is correct or not. If he hasn’t corrected this, then he continues in serious theological error. If he has, fine. But the video was sent to me, I was asked if it was Scriptural, and I evaluated it for that reason. I will admit that I learned a couple interesting things from the sermon, but what is said here involves a serious deficiency in Christology.

Briefly, the first error is contained in the first sentence, “As far as God is concerned, there’s only two men who have ever existed, Adam and Yeshua.” This is such a strange statement that cannot be reconciled with reality. There are countless men who have existed, and all are known by God. Jesus Himself said as much in Mark 12:26 –

“But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?”

Being gracious, we will overlook the obvious error that says that there are only two men who have ever existed and grant that he later defines it as referring to the state of man. Man is either in Adam, or in Christ – and there is no other option apart from those two. That is made explicit in Scripture by Paul in both Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

He next says, “Everybody is either part of the first Adam, or part of the second Adam.” This is an error in terminology which is not supported in Scripture. One is either “in” Adam, or “in” Christ. The term “part of” is not found in Scripture, nor does it align with sound doctrine.

One is “in” another because they bear the traits of another. One is in Adam, and he bears the traits of Adam. He may be a part of Adam’s offspring, but that is incidental. When one is “in” Christ, it means that he now bears the traits of Christ. He no longer possesses Adam’s sin nature. One may be a part of what Christ is doing in the world, but again – such a term is incidental.

When Jesus said to Peter in John 13:8, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me,” He was not speaking of physically being a part of Christ, but of having a portion, or share with Christ.

His third, and most egregious error, and which is heretical in what it teaches, is the statement, “Adam and Yeshua were both created by Ha’Shem, by God, directly and personally.”

Jesus is not a created being. That is the error of many cults, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, Jesus, in His humanity, is a *part of* the creation. There is a world of difference between the two, and it is what defines the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy.

To state that God created Jesus directly and personally as He did with Adam, is to then deny the entire body of Scripture which points to the begetting of human beings, one to another, from Adam to Christ.

God created all things, it is true, but the body of Christ, is an incidental part of creation, not a direct act of creation. Rather, God prepared a body out of that creation for the incarnation. This is evidenced by Hebrews 10:5 –

“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:
‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.’” Hebrews 10:5

Scripture, given by God, carefully – even meticulously – details the preparation of the body of Christ, through seventy-five direct generations of fallen human beings as is recorded in Luke 3, and with the introduction of even more fallen souls who are found in the pages of Scripture, and who likewise enter into His genealogy.

To say that Jesus was created by God, directly and personally, and to have that mean what is being conveyed in that sermon, would be exactly the same thing as saying that Charlie Garrett was created by God, directly and personally.

It is at best a category mistake, but such a category mistake results in the formulation of a heretical doctrine. The body of Christ, despite having come through these innumerable fallen souls was *prepared* perfectly by God, not suddenly created. Jesus is the seventy-seventh name noted in Luke’s genealogy, and God is the first.

The record is given, and the details are provided, to ensure that the error of assuming that Jesus was a being created directly and personally by God, would not be made. The statement that Jesus was created is incorrect, but that He was – and is – without sin is true.

But how can that be reconciled? If Jesus' humanity descended from fallen beings, then how can it be that Jesus was without sin? The answer is found in what was commanded to Abraham in Genesis 17, and which is found in the body of every properly observant Jew concerning this precept to this day, even if they missed the significance of what it anticipated – circumcision.

*It was fitting for Him, our Lord Jesus
For whom are all things, and by whom they are as well
In bringing many sons to glory, even us
As the precious words of Scripture do tell*

*To make the Captain of our salvation
Perfect through sufferings, His great tribulation*

*For both He who sanctifies
And those who are being sanctified too
Are all one; in His death each of us dies*

*A marvel in how His children He does accrue
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You*

II. Jesus Christ – the Sinless Man

God said to Abraham in Genesis 17:11 that being circumcised in the flesh of the foreskin was “a sign of the covenant between Me and you.” A sign is representative of something else. It is not a thing all by itself, as many Jews seem to perceive it. “See, I am circumcised, and this is the sign of the covenant between God and me. I am right because of the cut in my flesh.”

That is incorrect. A sign anticipates, pictures, and reveals something else. This is why Moses speaks twice in Deuteronomy of circumcision of the heart in verses 10:16 and 30:6, why Jeremiah repeats that many hundreds of years later in Jeremiah 4:4, and then Paul explains what a true Jew is with these words –

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” Romans 2:28, 29

The physical aspect of circumcision looks to an inner aspect. If the latter is missing, the former is void of any value. Indeed, circumcision is not limited to the Jewish people. Rather, it has been and is practiced by Gentile cultures around the world, and their circumcision is as meritless as the circumcision found in Jews whose hearts are not circumcised along with their flesh.

If circumcision is a sign of something else, then what is it a sign of? It is that which many other signs from the Old Testament anticipate, Christ. Adam, a true and actual human, was created without sin, but fell through disobedience. In his fall, sin entered the world, and as Paul then explains –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.” Romans 5:12-14

In other words, all bear Adam’s image, meaning his sin nature. Adam sinned, and in Adam all sinned. Because of sin, man is unrighteous. But God declared Abraham righteous by a simple act of faith. That is seen in Genesis 15, prior to the giving of the sign of the covenant –

““Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.’

⁶ And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”

-Genesis 15:6

The righteousness of Abraham led to the covenant with Abraham, and the covenant of Abraham was given a sign – circumcision. That sign anticipated the coming of Christ. Abraham understood this because he had already been told as much in Genesis 12:

“Now the LORD had said to Abram:
‘Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.
² I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
³ I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” Genesis 12:1-3

The promise of Messiah had already been made, the continued understanding of His coming is implied in the words to Abraham, and thus, Messiah would come through Him. As Abraham was not the father of all the families of the earth, then it follows that the words spoken to him were in relation to Messiah who would descend from him. This is something that would be again confirmed to him.

Later, as we saw, Abraham was declared righteous by faith in God’s words. And today, how is one declared righteous? It is through faith in Christ. But that is getting ahead of ourselves.

We have to remember that it is the humanity of Christ which makes this obtainable. As Christ was not created, directly and immediately, then He descended from Adam and his subsequent generations – as the Bible clearly lays out.

But if all in Adam have sinned, then how can Christ, who is descended from Adam, be sinless? And indeed, Paul clearly says that Christ is so descended. Was David descended from Adam? Yes or no? We all agree that it is so. And, in fact, David inherited sin because of this –

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.” Psalm 51:5

David is descended from Adam. But Paul says of the gospel to his protégé Timothy –

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.” 2 Timothy 2:8

If David is of the seed of Adam, and Christ is of the seed of David, then Christ is of the seed of Adam. In proper theology one plus one always equals two. To support this further, the author of Hebrews says that Christ arose from Judah (7:14).

The term “seed of David” cannot be misconstrued or twisted because of this. The genealogical record does not allow anything but a real descent from Adam through these men, and then to Christ Jesus. But this is only true in His human nature. And so, where is the dilemma resolved?

It is because of a young Jewish girl named Mary. Whether Mary is of the line of David or not is debated. She was a cousin of Elizabeth who is clearly from the priestly line of Levi through Aaron. But this does not mean Mary was.

It could be that the mother of Mary, and the mother of Elizabeth, were sisters descended from Aaron, but Mary’s mother could have married a man of Judah. If so, then Mary would be reckoned as being of the tribe of Judah through her father. Regardless of this though, Joseph was of the tribe of Judah and the house of David –

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.” Luke 1:26, 27

Because the line of a child is based on that of the father, to include all inheritance rights, the birth of Jesus would have been reckoned as such. However, as the account tells us, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her. God is the Father of Christ.

As sin travels through the father, and as Christ’s true Father is God, He inherited no sin. The rite of circumcision, the sign of the covenant, is simply a picture of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It is the cutting of the sin nature because of the cutting of that which transmits the sin from father to child. Picture fulfilled. Hence, circumcision is not required to be included in the New Covenant, as Paul clearly states again and again in his epistles.

This then takes us back even further. The Bible has spoken of the generations of Adam, the generations of Noah, the generations of Shem, Terah, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau, Levi, and so on. The seed of the man has directed the course of human history, even to Christ.

But there is another Seed which affects all of them – the Seed of the woman. We were admonished earlier to stop and ponder why the Messiah would be called the Seed of the woman. It is the seed of man by which genealogies would be determined. Right?

However, it is the Seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head. The Lord didn't say to Eve, "Your seed will bruise the serpent's head." She just assumed it was so. He said to the serpent, *v'evah ashit benekha u-ben ha'ishah* – "And enmity I will put between you and between the woman."

Eve had to assume that "the woman" was her, and the assumption was wrong. One can argue at another time if the woman is Israel or Mary, but Mary is of Israel. The Seed of the woman is the Man, Christ Jesus. Mary was the human receptacle for the God-Man. Thus, He bears all of her humanity, but none of man's sin.

The sign of circumcision is fulfilled. The sin-nature of Adam is cut, and the righteousness of God is found in Him. This would not be true if Jesus were a created being. He would not bear the humanity of David, which Paul clearly states is found in Him.

He would also not be a descendant of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, as promised to them. Paul explicitly says that, and he cited Scripture to show that the human link is found in Christ –

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ."

-Galatians 3:16

Again, to deny the genealogical record of Christ, leading to His incarnation and which makes up His humanity, one has to completely abuse the force and intent of the entire body of Scripture. Jesus was born into the stream of humanity, not created, and He was and is fully human.

More importantly, a denial of the truth of the genealogical humanity which led to Him would result in a problem with the deity of Christ as well. If Mary was just a receptacle for the creation of Jesus as some have claimed, then 1) Jesus is not God, because there

is only One God who cannot create another God, or 2) God would have had to create a body for Christ, which He then united with.

There would be no begetting of His humanity in the process. This is similar to a confusion of thought concerning Christ's deity which is seen in the error of the heretic Arius. He said, "If the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not."

This is an error in understanding the nature of God. Jesus Christ is God. If God created Jesus in the womb of Mary, and yet He is God, then God and His creation are one indivisible single unit, but they are not. The incarnation says that God is the Creator and the creation is created.

Therefore, there is a distinction between the humanity and deity of Christ, a doctrine known as the hypostatic union. This describes the union of God and Man in the person of Jesus Christ – two hypostases, or states, in one.

He didn't possess humanity before His conception, but since His conception, He is clothed in humanity forevermore. And although He is united with human flesh in this "hypostatic union," He is not bound by the human nature; He remains fully God. His two natures are not in any way separate and yet they in no way intermingle. But if His body was created in the womb by God, for Jesus who is God, the two would intermingle. Rather, His humanity remains human. He has all the attributes of man.

1. Human genealogy
2. He aged and increased in knowledge,
3. He prayed
4. He got hungry.
5. He got tired.
6. He felt compassion.
7. He wept.
8. He was thirsty.
9. Many times, more than 100 in fact, He is called the Son of Man or the Son of David, demonstrating his human nature.

Adam was created, and he is not God, though he wanted to be like God. Jesus Christ IS God. This is exactly the opposite of what Mr. Prasch later says in his sermon. He says, "He was God who became a man" (23:50). This is incorrect. He IS God who united with

humanity in the incarnation. But unlike Adam, He treated His state in exactly the opposite way–

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

-Philippians 2:5-8

In the womb of Mary, there was not a creation of man and a uniting with that man, thus forming a human who *is* God – a logical impossibility, because God is infinite.

Instead, there was a human who was a part of the creation and who was designed to bear children, who then was overshadowed by the Creator in order to beget a Son. The result is the God-Man, Jesus Christ. He is a fully human, but He *is also* God. This is why the very first page of the Bible tells us that all things reproduce after their own kind. Humans beget humans. God begat a Son. And Jesus Christ is the God-Man.

The humanity of Jesus Christ serves all of the purposes of redemption for fallen man, because He is the embodiment of all that is needed to redeem fallen man. Without this humanity, man could not be redeemed, but through the shed blood of Christ, it is possible. But more, without the shed blood of Christ, it is impossible.

All of the types and pictures of the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant only anticipated the coming of Messiah. As Hebrews 10:4 says –

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

If one thinks about it logically, Christ is both the sacrifice for sin, and He is the standard for judgment. He was found without sin, and He prevailed over death because of it. He is the embodiment of the law, and therefore, what He has done is the ideal to which all others must attain in order to meet God’s standard and be accepted by Him.

Therefore, one will either be found in Christ, and thus acceptable to God, or he will not be in Christ and be found unacceptable to God. The judgment will be that simple to conduct. There will be no balances to weigh out good and bad. There will be no listing of deeds leading to justification. There will be no time in purgatory which leads to a state

of sanctification and holiness. There will only be those in Christ and those who are not in Christ. Those in Christ will be saved; the others will be condemned.

For now, we will close with the thought that theology matters, doctrine matters, and both of them matter in being precise. It is one thing to not know a matter, be given the gospel, and to then be saved by receiving the gospel.

It is another thing to be taught a heretical teaching and then be asked to trust in the one whom that heretical teaching proclaims. The first will be saved. Such a person does not need to be told the many intricate details of the incarnation of Jesus Christ in order to be saved. He simply hears the gospel, receives it, and is saved.

However, when someone is told in advance of hearing the gospel that Jesus is a created being; or that Jesus Christ is not God; or that people need to continue to observe the law in order to be saved; or that a person can lose his salvation; and on and on and on, he has put his trust in a false Jesus and he will not be saved.

How can we know this is true? Because Paul says as much in Galatians 1 –

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:6-9

Another gospel is no gospel. Be sure to share the gospel, but don’t confuse who Jesus is, what the nature of Jesus Christ who is God is, or anything else in your presentation. Stick to the basics, and then they can go about ruining their doctrine all by themselves if they so wish. Or, they can pursue that which is sound and reasonable in order to stand approved before the Lord on the Day when we face Him for our rewards and losses.

Closing Verse: *“For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah...” Hebrews 7:14*

JESUS CHRIST, THE GOD-MAN PART II

HIS DEITY

Revelation 22:12, 13

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

Theology really matters, and it is of prime importance in the life of human beings. Theology simply signifies the study of God and of religious belief which is in line with that.

What is God like, what are His expectations for man, and so on are truly important subjects because if one is wrong in his theology, and there are certain expectations of a person in order to have a right relationship with God, then that relationship is either in question or nonexistent.

There are those who hold to the Law of Moses for their justification, and there are true Christians who have accepted the grace found in Jesus Christ. Both believe in the same God, but they do not accept the same amount of revelation that this God has provided concerning Himself. That further revelation of Himself, meaning in what Jesus accomplished for us, will make all of the difference in one's eternity. Be assured of that.

Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and others claim they believe in the same God, but they reject the theology which says that God has so revealed Himself in the Person of Jesus, or that what is revealed of Him is different based on the very nature of His deity. It isn't a matter of further revelation. Rather, it is a denial of what is considered orthodox.

But the central point of Christian theology is that Jesus Christ is God. He is the incarnate word of God. It is not that He is not God, or that He is either one of many gods, or He is a lesser god. Rather, He is the *Pantokrator* – the Almighty. To believe otherwise, then, is to believe in a false Jesus. And to believe in a false Jesus is to believe in a false gospel. Paul says as much, first in 2 Corinthians 11 and then in Galatians 1 –

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different

spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:6-9

To accept another Jesus is to accept another gospel. And to accept another gospel is to reject the truth of God in Christ. Without the Savior, there is no salvation. Theology really matters.

Text Verse: *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Colossians 1:15-20*

A denial of the deity of Jesus Christ, and that of the Holy Spirit, can be bafflingly complex. I say this because if some from the Jehovah’s Witnesses come to your door and starts talking, unless you know the Bible, and your theology is sound, they can twist what little you know to the point where you aren’t sure what you believe.

Getting off on a single point of doctrine, especially a major point of doctrine will end in a complete unraveling of sound theology. Either that, or one will have a single error with a logical contradiction to that one error.

This is normally found in denominational differences and generally occurs on points which are not salvific, or saving, in nature. But the deity of Christ is not a minor point of doctrine. It is fundamental and it is principle. To be wrong on this point will result in a

completely convoluted hermeneutic, or method of interpretation. To demonstrate this, we'll take the Jehovah's Witnesses as an example.

They deny the deity of Jesus Christ and teach that He is a created being. From that one incorrect point, their entire biblical hermeneutic becomes flawed. And it all starts with that one premise – Jesus Christ is not God. In speaking on their doctrine, the International Bible Society says –

“...Furthermore, he is not only called ‘God’ (regardless of the issue concerning the translation of John 1:1), but also ‘Savior,’ ‘Lord,’ ‘Redeemer,’ ‘God with us,’ and ‘Creator.’ We can pray to him; he helps us; he lives in us; he gave up himself for us; he forgives our sins; he receives worship - all things, which in the Old Testament are clearly within the jurisdiction and ability of ‘Jehovah.’ Yet in the face of all this, the doctrine of the Watchtower Society would have us believe that this One is some form of created being? Frankly, not only is that incongruous, it is the worst form of blasphemy - relegating to a creature the attributes of Jehovah.”

As you can see from that one quote, translational differences arise, theological differences are held to, and a completely different gospel – because of the presentation of a completely different Jesus – is accepted. How can such a vast array of differences arise when the same source text is used? It is because of the spirit of antichrist.

Yes, that is exactly what John says of it as we will see as we progress through the sermon today. For now, understand that theology really matters, and that proper theology is obtained through a proper evaluation of God's superior word. And so, let's evaluate that word once again, and may God speak to us through His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Unto Us a Son is Given

To open our previous thought concerning the humanity of Christ, Isaiah 9:6 was cited, “For unto us a Child is born.” However, Isaiah continues the verse. He next says, “Unto us a Son is given.” It must have perplexed Isaiah, and indeed any who have read Isaiah's words, as to what “a Son is given” must mean.

A child being born implies, and it even demands, that the child is a human being. The reference “us” demands this. But if “unto us” is speaking of humanity, and a Son is being given to humanity, it appears that this “Son” is coming from outside of humanity.

Suppose the object was a cake, and the statement was made referring to the Americans and the Germans. An American might say, “Unto us a cake is made.” It is obvious that the cake is an American cake – in all its tasty goodness. But the person speaking is also dealing with the Germans, and so he says, “Unto us the ingredients are given.”

The obvious meaning is that though the cake is made in America, and therefore it is an American cake, the ingredients have come from Germany. It is, therefore, German by nature. Oh! Das schmeckt sehr gut! This is the thought which must be considered in Isaiah’s words. There is a Child born – a human being. But there is a Son given. The subject of the first is a human; the subject of the second must be other than human.

This must be so, because the next verse says, “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” If a Child being born embodies the idea of humanity, the idea of the giving of a Son must then imply the concept of deity because it is directly performed by Yehovah Sabaoth, or “Yehovah of Hosts.” Thus, when properly understood, it is God who gives the Son.

This might be a misunderstanding of the matter, and simply a play on words, but a description of this Child who is the Son is then given. Taken as a whole, Isaiah 9:6, 7 says-

“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” Isaiah 9:6, 7

Some of the responsibilities, titles, and descriptions could be argued over as to their intent, but some of them assuredly cannot be. We will look at those and pass over the others for now.

First, He will be the Mighty God. How can that be? The Hebrew says *el gibbor* – “God mighty.” That is direct and to the point. This is even more so when considering that in the very next chapter of Isaiah, the same term, *el gibbor*, is given again –

“And it shall come to pass in that day That the remnant of Israel, And such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, Will never again depend on him who defeated them, But will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. ²¹ The remnant

will return, the remnant of Jacob,
To the **Mighty God.**” Isaiah 10:20, 21

There, it is speaking of *Yehovah qedosh Yisrael*, or Yehovah *the Holy One of Israel*. It would be unthinkable, literally unthinkable, for the Lord to place the only two uses in Scripture of *el gibbor*, or “mighty God,” only one chapter apart and expect His reader to consider one as deity and the other as some type of created being.

It would be the epitome of confused terminology and contradictory thinking. One refers to the coming Messiah, and one refers to Yehovah. Thus, the two are clearly identified as One. This is especially so when Isaiah is inspired to continue with his words by calling this One *abiad*, or “Everlasting Father.” It is a term unique to Scripture, and it is speaking of the Father of eternity; the possessor of time.

This Father of eternity, as with all of Isaiah’s descriptions as speaking of the coming Messiah, is not to be confused with God the Father. The title shows possession, not position. The father of the Hebrews is Abraham. He possesses the title even though he is dead and is no longer in the position. Thomas Edison is called the father of the lightbulb because he was the one who invented and developed it. He possessed the idea and then developed it.

Abiad, the Father of eternity, is the One who possesses time. He created it and He has mastery over it. This Child who was born, this Son who has been given, is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End; He is the First and the Last. There is no time that He did not exist and there is no time He will not exist. This is what the title means.

Further, Isaiah says that His government will be established, and it will continue from then on, even forever. David had come and gone. It was promised that one of his sons would establish his kingdom forever, but David’s forever kingdom is only in name, not in actual personal authority.

What Isaiah speaks of here is a government which will have an eternal authority, implying the One who rules will rule forever. Only One who is immortal could actually fulfill this. However, we again see the dual nature of this coming One.

He is the Everlasting Father, meaning uncreated and eternal, and yet, there is a point in which His throne is established and in which it continues on from. As the Lord of Hosts will accomplish this, one can – in hindsight – look back and see the incarnation of Christ clearly referred to here. He is God, and yet He is Man.

But could this simply be an exalted way of Isaiah speaking which is maybe poetic in nature? Could the Lord have used Isaiah's unique style to convey to us something that we easily confuse, like the words of a poet who is speaking of one thing while forming words which seem to allude to another thing?

The answer is, "No." This is not merely style conveyed by Isaiah. It is revelation transmitted from the Lord. This is perfectly certain when we read comparable words from Micah:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting." Micah 5:2

Here we see words equivalent to those of Isaiah. A Ruler is prophesied to come, but this Ruler will obviously have a beginning. This is evident from the words that He would come forth out of a location. In this case, Bethlehem Ephrathah.

Because Bethlehem Ephrathah is a part of creation, it could not have existed into eternity past. The world is not eternal. It had a beginning. Bethlehem has a name, and it was identified as a location at some point after it came into existence at the creation.

However, and at the same time, the One who Micah prophesies about is coming forth from that location, but He has *motsaah*, or "goings forth," which are *miqedem*, or "from the east." It is an idiom meaning, from the absolute forepart. In other words, from eternity itself.

Just as – from man's perspective – the sun rises from nowhere, so this Ruler would also come from the eternal past. There is no beginning to His coming. Instead, it simply *is*. The author then further defines this by saying *mime olam*, or "from the vanishing point," meaning from the place where nothing is known of it.

The *motsaah*, or "goings forth" is a plural construct in the Hebrew. It signifies the eternal and continual generation of the Son from the Father. There is no time that it did not occur, and it shall occur for all eternity. Charles Ellicott says of this –

"The nativity of the governor of Israel is evidently contrasted with an eternal nativity, the depth of which mystery passes the comprehension of human intellect: it must be spiritually discerned." Charles Ellicott

And this is true. Israel could not, and indeed still does not, discern this. The veil remains when the law is read. What the words here clearly imply is that because He was before the creation, He must be the Creator, because only the Creator can exist before that which is created.

But this misunderstanding is also one which goes beyond the Jewish sages, rabbis, and common folk who have overtly rejected Jesus as the Christ, or Messiah. It is one which is continued on by many who supposedly accept the coming of Christ in the Person of Jesus.

The denial of the deity of Jesus Christ is no less damning than the denial of His humanity. This is for several reasons. First, even from the Old Testament Scriptures, it is perfectly evident when compared to who Jesus is, what He accomplished, and what is written about Him that He is God.

Before His coming, the words could simply not be fully understood. But with His coming, they become as clear as crystal. Secondly, what is ascribed to Jesus after his coming – meaning by the writings of the apostles – is impossible to mistake when properly considered from the context of what is presented. The quote by the International Bible Society, which was cited earlier, sums that up very well.

What is said about Yehovah, or the Lord God, in the Old Testament is attributed directly and unambiguously to the Person of Jesus in the New. Only a fool, a heretic, or a lunatic would deny the obvious nature of what the New Testament proclaims.

To speak on the deity of Jesus Christ could go on – literally – for innumerable sermons. But all that is required is one. One does not need to provide all evidence to establish the truth of a matter. There is a point where the evidence is sufficient to do so, and then discovering all of the other such incidences can come as one matures in his understanding and study of Scripture.

This is what we have done since Genesis 1:1, and it is what we will continue to do as long as we travel through the pages of Scripture. For now, we will simply establish the fact that Jesus Christ is clearly presented as God in Scripture without feeling the necessity of crossing every “t” and dotting every “i.”

*All rule and all authority in Him is found
The government will upon His shoulder rest
And from Him shall come a rule which will astound*

The nations will be at peace, no longer distressed

The ink has flowed from the pen guided by my hand

But I cannot comprehend what the words say

These words are so very hard to understand

I pray the Lord reveal them to me some wondrous day

As mommy lay sleeping, exhausted from caring for the Boy

He tenderly watched over her just as He today watches over us

To be found in the Everlasting Father is eternal joy

This is the amazing splendor to be found in the Lord Jesus

II. Jesus Christ – the Eternal God

The denial of the deity of Jesus Christ is an ancient heresy, overtly dating back at least to the time of Arius in the third century. It is, however, alluded to by the apostles who penned out Scripture at times. John certainly had this exact heresy on his mind when he wrote these words –

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

-1 John 2:22, 23

The words speak of the Father/Son relationship between the two. John is doing what he had already done throughout his gospel by connecting the two in the relationship of the Godhead. If the Father is God, which is clearly presented in Scripture, then the Son is also God. Both are God, and yet there is only one God.

Further, the very reason for the way the Genesis 1 record is made is to give us insights into what God would do in Christ. In Genesis 1, we read that the grass, the herb, the fruit tree, and the sea creatures and the living creatures of the land – indeed all species – reproduce after their own kind. When one thing generates an offspring, the offspring bears the same nature as that which generated it.

Why did God give such meticulous detail concerning this on that first page of Scripture? It was to alert us to Christ. When we are told that Jesus Christ is the only begotten of the Father, it is to let us know that God has begotten a Son, who is God. And because His mother is human, it is to convey to us that He is also a Man.

Despite being complex, the mystery of the Trinity *is* revealed in Scripture and it accurately explains the Godhead. It is the only teaching which aligns with a proper analysis of the Bible. The Person of Jesus Christ is the One who reveals the fullness of the Godhead to us and it is He who worked, on our behalf, to reconcile us to God.

And why did He do this? To destroy the works of the devil and to remove the stain of sin which we bear, and which keeps us from any relationship with the Father. It is Jesus and His cross which allows us this wonderful restoration. But, the work of salvation is – as Jonah clearly states – a work of the Lord. As he says, and as the Bible confirms, *“Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9).*

If salvation is of the Lord, and if Jesus were simply a created being, then it really wouldn't be of the Lord, except in an indirect and dubious manner. But this is what the Jehovah's Witnesses and others claim.

To dispel this, and to show the utter folly of it, we will look at the work and the words of the Lord from the Old Testament, and then compare them to the work and words concerning Christ in the new. In this, we will form a basis for the certainty of the deity of Christ.

What will be presented will demonstrate that either the Bible is a completely convoluted book, filled with contradiction and error, or it is a book which is given with a main purpose of showing that God Himself entered into the stream of humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ.

To do this properly, even if it is already obvious to anyone who has read the Bible, we need to ensure that we understand who Yehovah, meaning the Lord of the Old Testament, is. In other words, “Is **He** God or not?” As obvious as that sounds, it is a necessary point of theology to determine. The first time Yehovah is mentioned in Scripture is –

“This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.” Genesis 2:4

That seems clear enough. Yehovah Elohim, or “the Lord God,” made the heavens and the earth. It follows nicely after Genesis 1:1 –

b'reshit bara Elohim eth ha'shemayim v'eth ha'eretz

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

However, as you can see, the word used in Genesis 1:1 is *bara*, or “create.” In Genesis 2:4, it is *asah*, or “made.” Are the two being used synonymously or not? Someone who wanted to simply argue the matter might do so. The Jehovah’s witnesses do exactly that with John 1:1. As there isn’t time here to argue foolishly, we will move on.

The third time Yehovah is mentioned is in Genesis 2:7 –

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Genesis 2:7

That follows in a precise manner after Genesis 1–

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” ²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1:26, 27

It would be rather difficult to justify denying that these verses clearly identify Yehovah as not merely the Maker, but the Creator, and thus God. But we will cut to the chase, and simply go to Isaiah to establish this without any doubt at all –

“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’” Isaiah 44:6

The claim is made explicitly elsewhere as well, but this is clear. There is one God and He is Yehovah, the Lord. The Old Testament proclaims this truth both implicitly and explicitly so many times and in so many ways that it is impossible to be considered otherwise.

With that baseline established – that there is One God and that Yehovah is that One God – it is now our privilege to determine if Christ Jesus is that same Lord God. One must, obviously, hold the New Testament as Scripture in order to do this, but supposing that is so, then this is our set goal which lies ahead of us.

To do this, all we need to do is to provide a list of Old Testament references referring to Yehovah, and then place them side by side with New Testament references concerning Jesus, and then see what comes up. The list will be long, but not exhaustive. It is simply

one which may help some poor soul with a family member lost in a cult to help him see the error of his ways.

Who did Isaiah 44:6 say is the Redeemer? The Lord was clear –

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his **Redeemer**, the Lord of hosts:

-Isaiah 44:6

But what does Scripture say about Christ Jesus? It is that...

Christ has **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”). Galatians 3:13

Yehovah is the Redeemer, and yet Christ Jesus is the Redeemer. 1+1 here should equal 2 in your mind. What else did Isaiah 44:6 tell us about Yehovah? He said...

“Thus says the Lord, the **King of Israel**.”

There were lots of kings of Israel, but the context of what is said about Jesus in the New Testament is clear. His kingship is on a completely different level. This is seen, for example, in Nathanael’s words –

“Nathanael answered and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the **King of Israel**!’” John 1:49

It was clearly understood that Jesus was not the “ruling king” of Israel at the time. Therefore, his words were proclaiming that Jesus is, in fact, Yehovah. The premise follows throughout the New Testament when speaking of God, the kingdom of God, Jesus, and so on. But is that all that we can find from Isaiah 44:6, or is there more? Well, Yehovah proclaims this –

‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God. Isaiah 44:6

And what does the New Testament proclaim? From the mouth of Christ Jesus Himself –

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ **I am** the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, **the First and the Last.**” Revelation 22:12, 13

Here, in one verse from Isaiah, there are at least five examples of Yehovah of the Old Testament bearing the same titles, positions, or responsibilities as those of Christ in the New. In your theology, 1+1 should equal 2. There are many more of these to be considered. This is said of Yehovah in Isaiah –

Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; **Behold, His reward is with Him,** And His work before Him. Isaiah 40:10

Christ claims explicitly that He is the One Isaiah prophesied about with these words –

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me.**

-Revelation 22:12

Yehovah again adamantly proclaims that He is the only God in Isaiah 46. In His words, He proclaims –

For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,
¹⁰ **Declaring the end from the beginning,** Isaiah 46:9, 10

But from the same passage as before in Revelation 22, Jesus also said –

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ **I am** the Alpha and the Omega, **the Beginning and the End,** the First and the Last.” Revelation 22:12, 13

The Lord, Yehovah, declares the end from the beginning only because He is the beginning and the End. It is impossible to be otherwise. And yet Jesus claims that same position without any ambiguity.

In Isaiah 44, one of the titles that Yehovah proclaims of Himself is that of being the Rock. Indeed, he says that there is no other –

Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? **Indeed there is no other Rock;** I know not one.” Isaiah 44:8

He was making an obvious allusion to the Rock in the wilderness from which the water flowed. It was something every Israelite would know and understand. And yet, Paul says this of Christ Jesus –

“...and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of **that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.**” 1 Corinthians 10:4

Using similar terminology, the following is said concerning Yehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts –

The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread. ¹⁴ He will be as a sanctuary, **But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense** To both the houses of Israel, Isaiah 8:13, 14

But what do both Paul and Peter say concerning Christ Jesus in the New Testament? They are in agreement on this. First Paul when speaking of faith in Christ –

“As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion **a stumbling stone and rock of offense**, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’” Romans 8:33

And Peter, he proclaims exactly the same message when speaking about Jesus. Thus, he equates Jesus with Yehovah –

Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected **Has become** the chief cornerstone,” ⁸ and **“A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.”** 1 Peter 2:7, 8

Either Paul and Peter were blasphemers, or they are rightly proclaiming that Yehovah has come in the flesh as Jesus Christ. But they don’t stop there. Yehovah adamantly proclaims that there is one, and only one, Savior, and that He is it –

I, even I, am the Lord, And **besides Me there is no savior.** Isaiah 44:1

Paul then picks up on that and says the following about Jesus –

“...but has now been revealed by the appearing of **our Savior Jesus Christ**, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:10

That is one of numerous times that Christ Jesus is referred to as the Savior. And what is the honor that Israel’s only Savior will receive? Yehovah Himself tells us –

“I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness,
And shall not return, That **to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath.**” Isaiah 45:23

The Lord, Yehovah, makes that awesome and all-inclusive statement. There are no exceptions. If Jesus were not the Lord, it would include Him too. But what does Paul say in Romans 14? There can be no mistake –

“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For **we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.** ¹¹ For it is written: ‘As I live, says the Lord,
Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.’”

-Romans 14:10, 11

And again, Paul confirms what Scripture so faithfully testifies to in Philippians 2 –

...that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,** of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, Philippians 2:10

So adamant is Yehovah concerning this precept, meaning bowing before Him, that He also proclaims the following. We will bow before Him because of His glory. That is the purpose of His words. He says so explicitly twice in Isaiah –

I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name;
And **My glory I will not give to another,**
Nor My praise to carved images. Isaiah 42:8

For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do *it*;
For how should *My name* be profaned?
And **I will not give My glory to another.** Isaiah 48:11

But John and the other apostles then ascribe this same glory to Christ Jesus. So many times does this happen, that it would take all day to cite them all. But this one will suffice –

“And the Word became 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.” John 1:14 (and etc. many times).

Speaking of shepherding, this is said of the Lord in Isaiah 40:10, 11 –

“Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him;

Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him. ¹¹ **He will feed His flock like a shepherd**; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.” Isaiah 40:10, 11

What Isaiah says is comparable to David’s words of Psalm 23 when speaking of the Lord, Yehovah. There, he said, “**The Lord is my shepherd**.” And yet Jesus proclaims –

“**I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ **I am the good shepherd**; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” John 14:11-16

Either Jesus was a blasphemer, or He is the Lord, Yehovah. 1 plus 1 in theology always equals 2. From this, the apostles identify Jesus as the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), again, clearly identifying Christ Jesus as Yehovah.

The words of the author of Hebrews both implicitly and explicitly demonstrate that Jesus is Yehovah. This is so clear and obvious that only the poorest of scholars could miss the significance of his intent. He cites a verse from the Old Testament which is applied to Yehovah, and then he says that the verse is speaking of Jesus. This occurs time and time again.

It is a pattern which, as we have seen, is repeated by Peter, John, and Paul again and again. Whereas Yehovah, the Lord, was the focus of all attention in the Old Testament, the title is never used in the New. Instead, Jesus is the focus of all attention, and the same verses, titles, positions, and analogies which are used concerning Yehovah are used concerning Jesus.

Though not nearly exhaustive, we have provided enough of them to demonstrate that the New Testament writers clearly and unambiguously identify Jesus Christ as the incarnate Yehovah – the Lord God.

As we saw in a previous sermon, but which we will repeat again to ensure your brain has received a new squiggle, even Luke – the great chronicler of the life of Christ Jesus – was very careful to note the deity of Christ throughout his epistle.

Following what He says here, and then carefully reading the rest of his gospel narrative, you will see how meticulous he was to ensure that no doubt of this particular point would arise –

“Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹‘Return to your own house, and tell what great things **God** has done for you.’ And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things **Jesus** had done for him.”

-Luke 8:38, 39

This wasn't a slip of words, but rather it was a carefully placed note that Luke was proclaiming that Jesus is God. As you read through the gospels, make a note of such things. They appear constantly there as well as in the book of Acts and also in the epistles.

The authors of the New Testament proclaimed that Jesus is God because they believed – with all of their hearts – that Jesus is God.

Before we finish, and to qualify what I said a moment ago, the name Yehovah is never mentioned in the New Testament, but He is referred to from time to time with other words, such as *kurios*, when speaking of Him. The only instances of the divine name, Yehovah, being used in the New Testament are from translational insertions in some Bibles. But the name itself is never used in the original manuscripts.

Rather, Jesus is the focus of the New because He is the Lord God Almighty. To deny this fundamental principle of who He is, then, is to deny Him. The Father/Son relationship within the Godhead does not mean that one is God, and another is not God. Nor does it mean that one is the Lord God and another is a lesser god. Together with the Holy Spirit, they are One essence expressed in three individual Persons.

To summarize: What we have done is to first establish that Yehovah is God and that there is none other. From that logical steppingstone, we have then demonstrated that

the position, attributes, titles, and authority of Yehovah belong to the Person of Jesus Christ.

The Bible is not contradictory, nor is it convoluted. It is clear, precise, and unambiguous in this matter. Therefore, there is no need to argue over the wording of John 1:1, nor of the other verses which are disputed by those who deny the deity of Christ. Those verses simply confirm that what they are proclaiming is in accord with what Scripture, on this larger level, already confirms.

One should not miss the forest for the trees. The trees can be, and indeed are, argued over. But the forest is one large proclamation of the Eternal God – Jesus Christ is Yehovah! Jesus Christ is Lord. And thus, shall our proclamation be, to the glory of God the Father.

From the previous sermon, we learned that Jesus is fully human. In His humanity, He is uncreated except as is incidental to the initial act of creation. His humanity descends from Adam, through Abraham, through David, etc.

In this sermon, we have learned that Jesus Christ is fully God, nothing less.

Thus, Jesus is the God-Man. He is not a finite human who is the infinite God – a logical contradiction. Rather He is a human who is also God – two natures which never overlap, but in which there is no separation. Next, we will look at the doctrine of atonement, and why this incarnation – this God-Man – was necessary for our atonement.

Only in understanding the nature of Jesus Christ, can what Christ came to do be fully understood. The simple gospel is, in fact, simple. But the substance behind it is amazingly complex. It requires great precision of thought in order to avoid heresy which then leads to a false Jesus and a false gospel.

Closing Verse: *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it ¹robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:5-11*

JESUS CHRIST, THE GOD-MAN, PART III

GOD'S ATONING SACRIFICE FOR SIN

Leviticus 16, The Day of Atonement.

"The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the Lord. ² The Lord said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die. For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover. ³ "This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place: He must first bring a young bull for a sin offering^[a] and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. ⁵ From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁶ "Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. ⁷ Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁸ He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat.^[b] ⁹ Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat. ¹¹ "Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. ¹² He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. ¹³ He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die. ¹⁴ He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover. ¹⁵ "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. ¹⁶ In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. ¹⁷ No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make

atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel. ¹⁸ “Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull’s blood and some of the goat’s blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. ¹⁹ He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. ²⁰ “When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹ He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness. ²³ “Then Aaron is to go into the tent of meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them there. ²⁴ He shall bathe himself with water in the sanctuary area and put on his regular garments. Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar. ²⁶ “The man who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷ The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and intestines are to be burned up. ²⁸ The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁹ “This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves^[c] and not do any work—whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you— ³⁰ because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins. ³¹ It is a day of sabbath rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. ³² The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments ³³ and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the tent of meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the members of the community. ³⁴ “This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.” And it was done, as the Lord commanded Moses.”

If you missed the sermons that covered this passage in Leviticus 16, it would be of great benefit to you to see how Christ Jesus fulfilled every single detail of the feast in His work

leading up to and culminating in the cross. Today, we will learn about what that means for us as His people.

We have learned from the previous two sermons that Jesus Christ is both fully human and yet fully God. In His humanity, He is uncreated except as is incidental to the initial act of creation. His humanity descends from Adam, through Abraham, through David, etc.

Of His humanity, Paul says in Colossians 1 that in Christ Jesus “we have redemption through His blood.” He also says that He is “the firstborn from the dead.” It is Sunday, and not normally a day to take a test, but let’s try it anyway –

1. Does God have blood? No.
2. Can God die? No.

See you get an A+ already. As Jesus Christ’s earthly body had blood, something which is created, and as Jesus Christ died, something that cannot happen to God, then Jesus Christ is...? Yes, correct. He is a human. In theology $1 + 1$ will always equal 2.

In His deity, Paul states in Colossians 1 that “He is the image of the invisible God.” Also, that “by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on the earth.” Further that “He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

Logically, thinking through these few words from Paul, it is perfectly evident that Jesus Christ is God. The Greek word translated as “image” signifies a mirror-like representation. It is a direct correspondence to something.

The meaning then is that Jesus Christ is the supreme expression of God. As God is infinite, and as Jesus Christ is the supreme expression of an infinite, then He must be God, because only God is an infinite.

Further, 1) if He existed before all things, and all things other than God are created, then He is God; 2) as He is the Creator of all things, then He is God, and 3) as all things continue to be sustained and held together by Him, then He is God. $1 + 1$ will always equal 2 in proper theology.

Jesus Christ is fully human and yet He is fully God, nothing less. Thus, Jesus is the God-Man. He is not God who is a finite human – a logical contradiction. Instead, He is a

human who is also God – two natures which never overlap, but in which there is no separation.

For fallen man, there is a reason why Christ, the God-Man, had to come. That reason branches out in both directions. His humanity is necessary for man's atonement, but His deity is also necessary for man's atonement.

Only with an understanding of this dual nature of Jesus Christ, can what He came to do be fully understood. Understanding this, at least in a limited way, will be our goal today.

Text Verse: *"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. ²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight." Colossians 1:19-22*

After Paul proclaimed both Christ's humanity and His deity, he speaks of reconciliation and peace instead of alienation. He says that this came about "through the blood of His cross." The implication is that without the blood, there would be no reconciliation, but rather enmity. And there would be no peace, but rather there would be strife.

What Paul describes, then, is the process of atonement. The word "atonement," in its simplest form signifies "a covering." It comes from the Hebrew verb *kaphar*, which means exactly that. For example, the first of its 104 occurrences is found in Genesis 6:1-

"Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch."

A very high stress is placed upon this word in Leviticus, and in particular in Leviticus 16 which details the Day of Atonement which occurred every year in Israel. In a covering, there is a pacifying action, and in that there is realized a satisfaction, or propitiation.

In this, one can see that something is exposed, and it is an offence. In covering that which is exposed, the one who is offended is pacified, and there is a return to a propitious (let us say a "happy") relationship. It is a favorable, benevolent relationship which is realized.

Today we will look into the atonement of man's sin, and why it was needed. We will also look into how that is accomplished by God, and why it could only be through Jesus Christ who is the God-Man. It could not have come about without Christ being both God and Man. That is what the Bible teaches, and that is what we shall see revealed today.

The biblical doctrine known as "Atonement" is a marvelous part of God's superior word. And so, let us turn to that word once again, and may God speak to us through His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Offering and the Place of Offering

The first implied atonement, or covering, found in the Bible – though that term is not used – is seen in Genesis 3. The man and his wife offended God. The harmony which existed was destroyed, and a curse came upon them.

It says in that account that even before the curse came, however, that the man and the woman realized their transgression, and their fallen state. This is seen with the words, "and they knew they were naked." In order to hide their nakedness, it says –

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings." Genesis 3:7

A knowledge they previously lacked now belonged to them. They were unashamed, and suddenly they were ashamed. To correct the matter, they covered themselves. But the record is specific. They didn't just use leaves to do so. They used t'enah, or fig leaves.

From this point on, the fig takes on a particular meaning in Scripture based on what is seen here. The fig signifies a spiritual connection to God, or the lack of it. This is seen, for example, in the words of Jesus in Mark 11 –

"Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³ And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.'" Mark 11:12-14

Jesus was making a theological point concerning the place where He had left the day before, and where He immediately returned to the next day – the temple. Jesus' cursing

of the fig tree was a parable of the ending of the temple rites and the law as God's means of restoration with Him. The spiritual connection of the law was to be severed.

He was taking us back to Eden. The man and the woman had tried to make a spiritual reconnection through the leaves of the fig to what they had lost, but it was too late. God rejected that, He cursed the serpent, the woman, and the man. Death entered the world through the act, and then came the judgment.

The spiritual reconnection could not come through their efforts. The fig leaves were insufficient to restore what had been lost. But while standing there, covered in their own unsuitable works, the Lord spoke out words of promise via His curse upon the serpent –

“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15

The new master of the realm, the serpent, would be defeated through the Seed of the woman. It is absolutely certain that this is a promise of the coming Messiah. The man and his woman stood there, dead in their sin and destined to die in their bodies. The Lord had just said to the man that he would return to the dust from which he had been taken, but the promise of life, even from their state of death, was made.

We know this because immediately after the pronounced curse upon the man, the very next words say, “And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20).

The man, though now spiritually dead, and destined to die – meaning he lived in a body of death, now named the woman he had been given – Khavah, or “Life.” Though they stood before the Lord dead, he had believed the promise that the author of death would be destroyed. If death was destroyed, life would come. The naming of the woman “Life” was an act of faith, and in that act, a covering was given –

“Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”
-Genesis 3:21

Something died in order to cover their shame. Blood was shed, and it was not done so by the man. Rather, it was the Lord who did it, and thus it was an act of grace. Further, it

was the Lord who clothed them – He provided the covering. There was no active participation on their part. They simply received what the Lord had provided. This is what the words indicate.

In only a few verses of the first chapters of the Bible, the entire basis and process for the redemption of mankind is given. The theology of what is presented in the Genesis 3 narrative will never be departed from.

Man fell; man is fallen; man cannot correct the matter; the Lord will intervene; the Lord – through His grace – will accomplish the necessary sacrifice; the Lord will provide the necessary covering for restoration with that sacrifice; and it will be based on a simple act of faith by the man. Everything in Scripture after this point will be based on that notion, and it will support that typology. Atonement is wholly an act of the Lord.

The atonement mentioned concerning sin, such as that on the Leviticus 16 Day of Atonement, is simply the word kaphar, or atonement. However, in order to be a covering, something needs to be covered. That is where the kapporeth, or mercy-seat, comes in.

The kapporeth is literally the propitiatory, or place of propitiation. That word is from the same as kopher or, the price of a life – meaning a ransom. Both words are derived from kaphar, or atonement. Thus, the verb kaphar is what covers the kapporeth, or place of propitiation.

To understand the significance of this place of propitiation, meaning the typology of its construction, what it is made of, and so on, a full study of the subject is found in our sermons of Exodus which detail the construction of the sanctuary of the Lord, and which includes all of the implements found within the sanctuary.

To understand the significance of the covering itself, meaning the sacrificial offerings, their blood for atonement, and so on, a detailed study of the subject is found in our sermons of Leviticus and Numbers which detail these things minutely.

God laid out every detail of what He was going to do in Christ Jesus in advance – showing through types and representations – so that nothing which occurred when He came should have been a surprise. The theology surrounding His work is detailed and complicated, but the concepts which they detail are simple enough to see and understand on a very basic level.

This is so much the case that the heart of what He accomplished is summed up in what is known as “the gospel.” All of the many books, chapters, and verses, all of the theology found in them, and all of the typology and imagery used in them, is summed up in the following words of Paul to those at Corinth –

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

In its most basic sense, without even mentioning the words grace, mercy, atonement, propitiation, substitution, expiation, or a hundred other theological terms, all of those things are summed up, and can be grasped, through this simple gospel message. And that gospel message, given by Paul, and which all of the apostles also preached (1 Corinthians 15:11), is then summed up in one verse from the gospel of John –

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

If one can understand that simple sentence, he can then grasp Paul’s fuller explanation of it in regard to the gospel. The mind grasps what God has done, and in that grasping – if faith to accept that message is exercised – atonement is provided, and salvation is secured. How can this be? It is because it follows the pattern given all the way back in Genesis 3. Once again –

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

1. The Initiator of the process is God. Salvation is of the Lord.
2. The offering is a Gift – God gave.
3. The recipient of the Gift is the world.
4. The beneficiary of it is general and yet exclusive – whoever.
5. However, it is all-inclusive of that exclusive group (none should perish).
6. And, those who are included are so included for one reason... they believe.
7. The action is fully sufficient and eternal in its effect – none should perish but have everlasting life.

Paul's simple gospel further explains Jesus' statement. Christ died. God's giving of His Son was not only as a living being, but as a being who would die. He was buried. Christ did not die and then quickly reanimate, as if he were given CPR. He was truly dead, and His life was completely extinguished.

He entered the realm of the dead and remained there long enough to satisfy all doubt that He was truly dead. But after that, He rose again the third day. Death could not hold Him. What Jesus proclaimed in John 3:16 is magnificently explained in 1 Corinthians 15. Summing up all of the theology of what God would do.

We get it, even without further explanation. This is so much the case that children who are just learning to speak understand it. And it is understood in every language and culture that it is presented. It is grasped by the humble and by the proud. It is perceived by the idiot and by the scholar. We get it.

But what is the theology behind that simplicity that we intuitively get? What does the gospel encompass? In regard to atonement, it means that Christ Jesus is both that which atones, and He is the place of the atonement.

In regard to Christianity, atonement refers to the need for a *kaphar*, or covering for our fallen state. In the reception of this covering, reconciliation between sinful man and the holy God is effected. This reconciliation is possible through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His blood, which is shed, *is* our *kaphar*, our atonement.

That shed blood of atonement is what then provides the propitiation. The Greek word used to explain this is *hilasmós*. It is a noun defined as "propitiation" It is an offering to appease or satisfy an angry, offended party. God is that offended party, and He is angry at man's sin.

This word, *hilasmós*, is only used twice in Scripture. Both times it speaks of Christ's atoning blood that appeases God's wrath in regard to that sin –

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." 1 John 2:1, 2

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10

Christ is the actual point of propitiation, but more, it is because of His death that this is so. Another noun, *hilastérion*, which is also found only twice in Scripture explains this. The word means “a sin offering.” It is that by which the wrath of the angry God is appeased.

In type, it was the covering of the ark which was sprinkled with the atoning blood on the Day of Atonement. Its two uses are found in Romans and Hebrews –

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:21-26

“For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; ³ and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, ⁴ which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; ⁵ and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.” Hebrews 9:2-5

As can be seen with the use of these two Greek words, *hilasmós* and *hilastérion*, which equate directly to the Hebrew words *kaphar* and *kapporeth* – and as we have already noted – Christ Jesus is both that which atones, and He is the place of the atonement.

But this only takes us so far. In our minds, when we receive the gospel, we are making a mental assent that God has done this thing, and that is then received by us. But Paul speaks of “another Jesus,” implying a false Jesus, in 2 Corinthians 11:4 –

“For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!”

He further speaks of a “different gospel” in Galatians 1 –

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:6-9

One speaks of a false Jesus, meaning a Jesus who is ineffective in atoning for man’s sin. The other speaks of a false gospel, meaning that what is presented cannot save. Together, these call out for a Jesus who is both truly God and truly Man, and for a salvation which comes from God alone.

*An offering for sin to restore the peace
I come to petition my God at His holy altar
Until I do, the enmity will never cease
But knowing He will forgive, in this I will not falter*

*He the holy altar, and He is the Door and the Tent
Christ the Lord is slain; His life ebbs away
In that exchange, God’s wrath is spent
Harmony is restored, and has come a new Day*

*Innocent and pure, no fault of His own
The death truly touches my heart
But in this exchange, I am clearly shown
That only through death, can there be a new start
Thank God that Another has died in my place
In His death I can again look upon God’s face*

II. Why the God-Man?

Why was it necessary for Christ to be a human in order to atone for man’s sin? In a previous sermon, two weeks ago, it was fully established that Jesus Christ is fully human. He wasn’t created as a human in Mary’s womb. Rather, He is fully human because Mary is fully human.

From her, He received all of the genetic information of His humanity – meaning all of that which came from Adam and those who descended from him, and which then was found in Mary.

This genetic information includes all of His human characteristics, including the knowledge of good and evil, human weakness, skin color, and on and on – just as any human possesses because of being born into a particular genealogy. This was necessary for reasons explained by the author of Hebrews –

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Hebrews 2:14-18

The author of Hebrews shows that there must be a necessary connection between the Christ and His people. An angel wouldn’t satisfy, nor would an animal. Further, a human body, created in Mary’s womb without any connection to her humanity would mean He was not made like His brethren in all ways.

The only thing Christ did not possess that we as humans possess is inherited sin – something which comes via the human father. The different categories exclude the possibility that the Christ would be anything other than a human being, descended from Mary, and God being His Father.

In this, the author uses the verb *hilaskomai*, or to make propitiation, to show that what Christ did in the granting of God’s mercy necessitated that a human being be the means of accomplishing the act of atonement. In His atonement, He made propitiation for the people’s sins.

In his defense of this, he will later – in Chapter 10 – demonstrate further why this was necessary. But before going there, one must go back to the law itself. The law was given to Israel as the standard which God expected for man. In the doing of the law, man could be expected to live. God says as much, explicitly, in Leviticus 18

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.” Leviticus 18:5

In essence, God told His people, all descended from Adam, that if they did the things of the law, they would live. “This is My standard. In meeting every precept, and in failing in none of them, you shall live.” In failing to meet the things of the law, life would not come.

However, within the law itself, there was given the provision for forgiveness of sin committed under the law through the sacrificial system. This system was highlighted by the annual Day of Atonement. The implication was that atonement was needed because the law could not be met. So obvious was this, that the Lord made it explicit in Leviticus 23 –

“And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. ²⁹For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people.” Leviticus 23:28-30

“You shall observe this day, and if you do not, your life is forfeit.” Atonement was *required* because *the people needed atonement*. What is still implied, but which is obvious, is that *none* had done the things of the law. God was angry at their sin, and they needed their sins covered over. With that understanding, Chapter 10 of Hebrews explains why only a man could actually atone for the sins of the people –

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Hebrews 10:1-4

First, the provisions of the law could not take away sin. They were a temporary, annual reminder to the people of this fact. And more, the reminder was that they were, in fact, under law. But it is the law which brought about the people’s infractions. If there was no law, then there would be no law to break.

Therefore, in order to atone for the sins of the people, there would need to be a Man to free them from the law. But more, there would need to be a Man without sin to do so. Otherwise, such a man with sin could not atone for his own sin, much less someone else's. But even more, there would need to be a Man, born under the law, who was also without sin, to do so. That is explained by Paul in Galatians –

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Galatians 4:4, 5

In order to atone for sin under the law, the Man who did so would have to be born under the law. Otherwise, He could not be considered an acceptable atonement, nor a suitable place for atonement. This is because the sacrifices of the law are given according to the law, and yet they did not actually take away sin.

To resolve this, only someone coming from under the law, but who had no sin *prior to*, or *during His time* under the law, could sufficiently and truly atone for sin. The author of Hebrews explains that this Someone is Christ Jesus –

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.’ ” ⁸Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), ⁹then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10:5-10

Paul says that the human Christ was born under the law to redeem those who were under the law. The author of Hebrews says that this is done by taking away the law which came through the Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant is taken away in order to establish the New Covenant – the Christ covenant.

This could only come about through a Man, it could only come about through a Man born under the law, and it could only come about through a sinless Man. And yet, He must be a Man who was born under a law that could not take away sin, meaning He must have been born without sin. And further, He must be a Man who lived without sinning under that same law.

And that premise then leads to the second half of the equation. Why was it necessary for Christ to be fully God in order to atone for man's sin? In the sermon last week, it was altogether established that Jesus Christ is fully God. Of this, and understanding what we went over, it is perfectly clear to any who are simply willing to check.

But why was this necessary? The answer follows logically with what we just deduced. A Man with sin could not atone for the sins of another. Rather, he too would need atonement. But the Bible, both implicitly and explicitly, teaches that man has inherited sin. The sin of Adam transfers to all of Adam's seed. This is stated explicitly by David –

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”

-Psalm 51:5

It is also taught explicitly by Paul –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.” Romans 5:12, 13

So, sin entered through Adam, and all are in Adam. But what about Aaron the high priest? When he and his sons were ordained, didn't the sacrifice for their sins make them sinless before God? Couldn't Aaron just have taken one of his four sons, sacrificed him, and been done with all of the sin of the world from that point on? Their ordination is detailed in Leviticus 8. In that ordination, they are clearly presented as having sacrificed for their own sins.

The law was established, and the men who were to be ordained as priests brought a sacrifice for their sins. This would then make them acceptable to sacrifice for the people of Israel. Once their sins were dealt with, why could they not be an acceptable atonement for the sins of the people?

The answer is the same as for the people. The blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin. The proof of this is found in the verse which immediately follows God's acceptance of the Levitical priesthood which was in Leviticus 9:24. In the following verses, Leviticus 10:1, 2 – we read this –

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not

commanded them. ² So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.” Leviticus 10:1, 2

Nadab and Abihu *were not made perfect*, nor did they remain perfect. Instead, they died in sin. At the end of that chapter, Moses became angry with Aaron and his remaining two sons because they did not eat the sin offering of the people, which was required under the law so that they could bear the guilt of the congregation.

Aaron’s reply to him was, “If I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?” (Leviticus 10:19).

The answer to his question is obvious, “No.” If the sin offering and the burnt offerings which were intended to take care of the sins of the priests, *before* they tended to the sins of the congregation, were tainted by what occurred, thus meaning they – even though priests – were also tainted, then how could they take on the sin of the people in order to purify them? Aaron’s logic was impeccable, and it revealed, right at the beginning of the law, how vastly inferior this priesthood is to that of Christ – infinitely so.

Understanding this brings us to understanding the need for Christ’s deity. It has been established that Christ had to be a human in order to save the people. However, if He was *only* a human, He would bear Adam’s sin.

If he were *created* as a human, as one person we cited had said in a previous sermon, he would have lacked the experiential knowledge of good and evil necessary to deal with man’s sin until he gained such knowledge. But that – as we saw in the Genesis account – comes by law. Only by an infraction of the law did man acquire that knowledge.

That knowledge, which was obtained by Adam, was passed on to Christ, but the guilt of it was not. This is, as we saw in the sermon on Christ’s humanity, because sin travels from father to son. But Christ had no human father. Rather, His Father is God.

As all things reproduce after their own kind, we have a human Man, born of a human woman, and born without sin – because He had no human Father. And yet, He possesses the knowledge of good and evil.

At the same time, we have the incarnation of God in Christ because He is begotten of the Father. He is the God-Man. Without the Deity of Christ, sin would have been involved in the picture, and atonement for man could never have taken place.

But with the Deity of Christ, we have a perfect man, born under the law. Thus, He *required no sacrifice* for sin, as Aaron did. He also lived under the law without sinning, and thus *He needed no sacrifice* for sins, as Aaron did. And He died under the law having no sin.

And thus, He was the acceptable offering for sin, and the acceptable place of offering for sin. He is both the *hilasmós*, or offering, and he is the *hilastérion*, or mercy-seat – meaning the place of offering. This is explained by the author of Hebrews –

Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.

-Hebrews 7:23-28

These things are both logical and expected based on the simple gospel given to us by Paul earlier. We may not think all of this theology through when we accept the gospel of our salvation, but all of it is implied. But what is more, is that the Deity of Christ is not only implied in these truths, it is proven because of them.

Christ Jesus died for sins, Christ Jesus was buried in His death. But that was not the end of the story. Christ Jesus rose again (Hallelujah!), proving that He had no sin. If He did have sin, He would have remained in the grave. But He did not. He rose. Concerning death, Peter says in Acts 2 that “it was not possible that He should be held by it.”

It could only be true if He was without sin, and being without sin, it was impossible that it could be otherwise. Thus, the Deity of Christ is first, an absolute necessity for our atonement, and secondly, absolutely proven through His resurrection.

Understanding this, it still has to be noted, to sufficiently explain God's process of atonement, that Jesus Christ actually did die. We must remember that Christ is both the propitiation for sin, and He is the place of propitiation for sin.

His blood was given to cover our sin, but our sin was placed upon the place of propitiation – God’s Mercy Seat. In other words, Christ truly did die, and Christ truly did die *for* sin. But Christ did not die *in* sin. Rather, His death was as a substitutionary death for our sin.

In this, and because we understand that He is God’s Mercy Seat, we can then fully appreciate what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 –

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

Christ became our sin and took our judgment upon Himself. In exchange, He grants us God’s righteousness, because being fully God, He is the possessor of the righteousness of God.

Christ redeemed us from the law, we stand justified through Christ’s fulfilling of the law, we are granted the righteousness of God in Christ, and we overcome the world and the power of the devil through the actions of our Lord. John explains this in his first epistle –

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1 John 5:4, 5

Earlier, we spoke of the shame which Adam and Eve experienced at the fall, and their useless attempts to cover that shame with *t’enh*, or fig leaves. The covering was insufficient, and the guilt remained. They attempted to work their way back into a right spiritual relationship with God, but they failed to do so.

After that, Adam demonstrated faith, and in his act of faith, God covered his two wayward children, setting the example of atonement and redemption which has never been deviated from throughout the entire body of Scripture.

John confirms that the covering of man is externally granted. It is obtained by being born of God. In that, one overcomes the world. It is through the work of God alone, and it is appropriated by us through an act of faith – nothing more. And in exchange for our shame and nakedness, or for any of our own futile attempts to cover our souls, when we demonstrate faith in what God has done, He carefully tends to us –

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Revelation 3:5

Who is he that overcomes? It is the one who trusts in what God has done through Jesus Christ – that He is the Son of God. And what does God do for you in that act? He grants you white garments of righteousness – His own righteousness – in place of your sin.

There is a true gospel, and there is the true Jesus, the Christ of God. The true gospel is that God has done all that is necessary to save the human soul and that we exclude ourselves from God’s promise when we attempt to earn His favor through the law.

The true Christ is Jesus who is both fully Man and fully God. As Jesus is God’s only begotten Son, Jesus is the only Messiah, and He is the only path for atonement, for justification, for sanctification, and for glorification before God. He is our both our propitiation and our place of propitiation. He is JESUS!

Call on Christ, receive God’s offer of pardon, and have your sins atoned for through His precious blood – to the glory of God the Father.

Closing Verse: *“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when 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. ¹¹ And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” Romans 5:6-11*

SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH FAITH ALONE

Romans 10:1-13

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. ⁵For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." ⁶But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*) ⁷or, "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

Paul is speaking in this passage about his brothers of the flesh meaning the Jews. They had gone about seeking a righteousness of their own, and not the righteousness of God which is found in Christ. Today, we will confirm that salvation is by grace through faith – alone.

To do this, we will choose the supposed gospel message of two prominent preachers to show where their fault is, and that what they proclaim is actually quite different than what Paul speaks of here. The messages actually boil down to one thought, and one thought alone – self. Let us endeavor to keep "self" out of the equation, except where God allows such an insertion.

During the Reformation, one of the points which was raised was that of the Five Solas, meaning "Five Alones." These were an obvious and open rebuke to the Roman Catholic Church which had, by their time, violated every precept of sound Christianity one could think of.

Roman Catholicism is a “plus” religion. But in God, there is no “plus.” What He decrees is fully sufficient in and of itself, and we need go no further than what He conveys to us to know if our state before Him is acceptable or not. The Five Solas, these “Five Alones,” are –

Sola Scriptura (“Scripture Alone”): The Bible alone is our sole authority for knowing God’s intent for His people. We need nothing more to know our standing before Him.

Sola Fide (“Faith Alone”): We are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, and that alone. Nothing else that we do can add to our salvation, and nothing else can make us “more” saved.

Sola Gratia (“Grace Alone”): We are saved by the grace of God alone. Nothing apart from God, and what He has done in Jesus Christ, can add to our salvation. The things we do may be in obedience to His word, such as being baptized, but they add nothing to the grace which is imparted to those who demonstrate faith.

Solus Christus or Solo Christo (“Christ Alone” or “Through Christ Alone”): A priestly class of mediators is unnecessary. We are saved through Christ’s work, He is our One Mediator between us and God, and there needs to be no intermediate to go before the Lord on our behalf. Jesus Christ alone is our Door of Salvation, and He is the Way to and through that Door as well. And once we are saved, He continues to be our only needed contact with the God of the universe.

Soli Deo Gloria (“to the glory of God alone”): We live for the glory of God alone, and we give no glory to any other being apart from God.

Everything that is good, right, and holy concerning these Five Solas is obliterated by the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholicism adds to each of these. For them, it is Scripture “plus” the church Canons, councils, edicts, and papal bulls. For them, it is faith plus works. For them, it is grace, plus cooperation to obtain greater graces. For them it is Christ plus Mary, Christ plus the pope, Christ plus the priests, and so on. And for them, glory is to be ascribed to Mary, it is ascribed to the pope, it is ascribed to the church, and it is ascribed to the saints. Reverence, prayer, petition, and even worship are given to these lesser “gods” which are no gods at all.

For each point, Roman Catholicism adds – plus, plus, plus, plus, and plus. The soundness of the faith, given to us by God through Jesus Christ, is utterly ruined and worthless in the presence of such “plusing.” In its place is a chaotic stream of man’s invention and a rejection of the purity of what is conveyed to us in the pages of Scripture.

Text Verse: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8, 9*

Of these points, most people who fall under the general umbrella of Protestantism accept that the doctrine of these Solas is sound, and there is – at first – a high degree of agreement in the general thought of what is being conveyed. Indeed, if almost anyone is asked, “Do you believe in “Sola Scriptura?” The answer will inevitably be, “Yes, of course.”

But for the large part, this is then immediately violated in their teachings. It is one thing to cite a rabbi, the Talmud, John Calvin, or Charlie Garrett, and it is a completely different thing to cite them as equal in authority to what is written in Scripture. But this is as common as oranges in Florida at harvest time.

For example, what is taught concerning the Feasts of the Lord, by almost every single person who has taught on the subject, injects countless Jewish traditions which are not even hinted at in Scripture, holding them up as authoritative.

Because of this, there is almost no understanding of the correct meaning of these feasts by the vast majority of Christians. Indeed, the number of those who truly “get” what is conveyed there is probably less than one percent of one percent of those who have even heard of them.

In the same manner, if you ask someone, “Do you believe in Sola Fide and Sola Gratia?” The answer will be “Of course! That is what the Bible teaches. I completely reject the Roman Catholic notion of such things.” And yet, what they say very well may not be true at all.

It is our duty to pay attention to what is being said as we listen to others who convey their idea about such things. In the end, we should be well-versed enough to know where error has crept into someone else’s theology. This error may not be heretical, but it is simply incorrect.

Incorrect implies the need for correction. Let us ensure that we stick to the basics given by God – meaning those things which are irreducible in their simplicity, and which convey only the truth of what He has delivered to us. Such truths are right there waiting to be found in His superior word, and so, let’s both turn to and contemplate that precious word once again, and may God speak to us through His word today. And may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Way of the Master

How many of us have listened to Ray Comfort evangelize someone on the street? He does a great job of it, doesn't he? His ministry is called, "The Way of the Master." The reason for this is that when Jesus spoke to people, He would get right to the heart of the matter.

He was able to discern what was amiss in someone's idea of what they needed to do in order to be right with God. Some people that He spoke to were so broken that He would simply give them grace, they would receive it, and they would go away restored in mind and soul.

We might think of a person who is completely down in heart and soul, he understands that he is as vile as any man who ever lived, but he doesn't know what to do about it. "Oh God, I am wretched and naked, and I can't find a covering for my sin."

Such a person does not need the weight of the law cast upon him. He already has that burden weighing him down. Jesus wouldn't walk up to such a person and say, "Yes, you are vile, but now I'm going to show you how truly vile you are. Not only did you commit adultery, but you also failed in the following 427 points of the law since you woke up this morning..."

Rather, He brought them grace, and they took the package, opened it, and through tears of joy and release, they went away full, clean, and satisfied. Here is an example for you to see this from Luke 7:44-50 –

Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. ⁴⁵ You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. ⁴⁷ Therefore I say to you, her sins, which *are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little."

⁴⁸ Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹ And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰ Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

This sinful woman went away forgiven, free, and filled with the hope that only Christ can provide. On the other hand, when someone would come to Jesus with a streak of greed, pride, or idolatry in his heart, He would bring it right out to the surface.

From there, He would either break that streak and then give him grace, or the person would be so caught up in what trapped him that he would leave without any conversion at all. Maybe he would even leave loving God less than before. An example of this is found in Mark 10 –

Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’”

²⁰ And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.”

²¹ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

²² But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Mark 10:17-22

Jesus knew the heart of the man before the first question was asked of Him. Instead of giving him grace, He gave him the law. “Here, this is what you need to do.” In an act of pride in the law, he responded as one under law would be expected to respond – “I’ve done all those things.”

But Jesus then got to the heart of the matter. The same God who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

The man loved his possessions, and quite possibly his personal obedience to the law – pick and choose as it may be – more than he loved the Lord his God.

This is The Way of the Master. Look at each individual, evaluate what they need, and then give that to them. If they need grace, why would you give them the law which negates grace? If they think they don’t need grace – “Well, I’m a good person,” then give them the law.

Once they see the weight of the law, and once that weight and burden terrifies them, then give them the grace that they thought they didn't need, but which they now realize they desperately need. And what is that grace? It is "Grace Alone" as we have already seen.

Ray Comfort does a great job of sending someone down the right path for most of the way that he sends them. He can get them right to the point where they realize they need GRACE! And then... he fails to give them what the Bible offers.

The problem with Ray's approach isn't the approach. It is the failure to make a distinction between what happened before Jesus was crucified, and what happens now. Jesus never told anyone that they could violate the Law of Moses. These people needed to repent, or change their mind, and turn from their violations of the law. This is what John the Baptist proclaimed, and it is what Jesus continued to tell the people, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

Unfortunately, Ray Comfort continues with this in a completely different dispensation. The dispensation of the Law was only a tutor to lead people to Christ Jesus. Until Christ was crucified, the grace of God which saves through Jesus Christ could not be granted. Instead, people observed the law, repented when they failed, and looked for mercy through the sacrificial system.

With the coming of Christ, the grace of God is revealed. It is a revelation which says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

To understand what this means, that God's salvation is a gift and that it comes through faith, one must simply understand what this gospel message is. Paul declares it in 1 Corinthians 15 –

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Paul then tells us how this is appropriated –

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10:8-10

Paul calls this gospel “the word of faith.” He then says that it is obtained through confession with the mouth, something which is not – by the way – a work, as is preposterously claimed by some. One believes and confesses. We’ll talk about that more later. In this, they are saved. From there, Paul tells what this means to the believer—

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14

This, then, is the gospel message, it is the process of receiving it, and it ends in the stated result. It is a process of belief leading to salvation. And so, what is wrong with Ray Comfort’s message? His message adds to this simple process given by Paul, and which is in accord with the other apostles.

How does Ray Comfort add to the message? Listen to his presentation on one of a thousand videos he has posted. He consistently tells his hearer, “You must repent.” He then explains that as, “you must turn from your sin.” He says it again and again. And he is causing damage to the gospel, and to the hearer of his false gospel, each time he says it.

Although this is a truth for Christians, it is not the gospel of their salvation. It is an addition to it, and thus, it is not the gospel of their salvation. It is a false gospel of faith plus works, which is different than Roman Catholicism only in order and type.

First, the Greek word for “repent” is *metanoëó*. It simply means “to change one’s mind or purpose.” Paul never uses the term in conjunction with salvation or the reception of the Spirit – never. The closest he ever gets to this is in 1 Corinthians 7:10, where he says, “For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Paul does not mean that repentance is necessary *for* salvation. He is saying that godly sorrow for one's state in life will lead them to seek out the salvation found in Christ. It is a changing of the mind. It must be remembered that salvation is based on faith in what Christ did, not on works.

One cannot be saved by merely repenting from sin. If a drunk gives up drinking and yet has no faith in Christ, he will never be saved. Paul's words cannot be used in and of themselves to say, "repentance leads to salvation."

But that is how Ray Comfort presents his message – "You must do this in order to be saved." If someone does give up his sins, based on what Ray Comfort says, it does not mean that he is any closer to God than before giving them up.

Instead, it is the grace of Christ which saves. The repentance of a sin may lead to faith in Him, or it may not. Either way, it is only by grace through faith that one is saved.

On the other hand, there is a sorrow of the world that Paul also writes about. There are many types of sorrows in the natural world. If we are sorry over losing a bank account full of money, that doesn't lead us to God. Instead, it just leads us to frustration and bitterness. If we are sorry over losing our girlfriend, that hasn't helped us in our spiritual life at all. Instead, it is simply a sorrow which is natural and of this world.

For the drunk who gives up drinking. If he is sorry for being a drunk because it led him to lose his job, he may change his mind (repent), give up drinking, and get his job back. In this, he may become proud and say, "Look at what I have done."

This sorrow then only produced death in him because of the sin of pride. Ultimately, through such sorrow there can only be regret. In the end, it produces nothing concerning salvation, but it continues to produce death in the unbeliever. But this is what Ray Comfort adds to his gospel. As he says, "You must repent, turn from your sin, and come to Jesus."

Those words are not found in the gospel which we read earlier in 1 Corinthians 15, and thus they are an addition to the gospel. As there can be no addition to the gospel, then it is a false gospel. Always be careful when handing out tracts that the Ray Comfort false gospel is not a part of the tract you are handing out.

For example, the tract "How Can We Know We'll Go To Heaven," written by Randy Alcorn, and which follows the Ray Comfort model says –

We cannot pay our own way. Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Because of Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross on our behalf, God freely offers us forgiveness.

To be forgiven, we must recognize and repent of our sins. Forgiveness is not automatic. It’s conditioned upon confession: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The author of this tract does not understand either the meaning of grace, nor does he understand the gospel as the Bible proclaims it. He further has taken a verse from 1 John out of its intended context. When we believe the gospel, and accept it as our payment for sins, we are forgiven – wholly and completely – past, present, and future.

Without giving a minute analysis of 1 John 1:9, suffice it to say that it is strategically placed between two antithetical proclamations –

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” 1 John 1:8-10

The premise of coming to Christ is that a person is acknowledging he is a sinner. There is no other need to call on Christ. Thus, a person who does so is admitting he has sin – exactly as 1 Corinthians 15 states. Further, confession is not the same as repentance, or “changing one’s mind.”

And finally, the idea of repentance, as laid out in this tract, or as given by Ray Comfort, is not what the biblical idea of repentance actually means. Their implication is that a person must first turn from his sin in order to be saved. That is not a part of the gospel, and thus it is a false gospel.

Nobody who needs to go to the doctor says, “I need to get myself better so I can go see the doctor.” That is putting the Ray Comfort Cart of Works before his horse. Instead, one goes to the doctor, is given the cure for his ills, and then – in faithful obedience to the salvation he has obtained, goes about in Christ’s sufficient power correcting his many deficiencies – hopefully.

But just as a person may or may not continue in the antibiotics given by the doctor, so a person may not continue to heal in his pursuit of the Lord. The Bible instruction we receive, after being saved, will determine the health of our walk. But it does not affect our arrival at the end. That was accomplished through a judicial act of Christ, justifying us – once and for all – when we received the grace of His gospel through faith.

The use of the word, “repent,” as given by Ray Comfort, is both misleading and it is harmful, because it presents giving up one’s sin as a necessary part of salvation. It is a false gospel. But... you may say, “Paul may not have said that you must repent in order to be saved, but Peter did. It’s right there in Acts 2:38.”

This is a doctrinal problem that has nothing to do with the gospel. First, the book of Acts is a descriptive account of the establishment of the church. Outside of a very few verses from Jesus in Chapter 1, it prescribes almost nothing.

Secondly, the context of Acts 2:38 does not apply to any living person today – Jew or Gentile – who has never heard the gospel. And thirdly, Peter’s message of salvation through Christ is exactly the same as Paul. Paul confirms this while speaking of Peter and the other apostles in 1 Corinthians 15:11 –

“Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”

Acts 2:38, where Peter was speaking to the Jews alone, says –

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Why did he say this to them? It is because they had just, within the past short period of time, rejected Jesus, nailing Him to the cross. In this, they *had* to repent, or “change their mind.” He wasn’t telling them to repent of anything else except their rejection of Christ. That is why a verse, preceding Peter’s instructions, said, “therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

If someone has, in his life, rejected the gospel, then – by default – he *must* repent of that. If he doesn’t change his mind about his previous *rejection* of the gospel, then he has not *accepted* the gospel. 1 + 1 will always equal 2 in theology, and for someone who has never heard the gospel, there is no repentance necessary in order to be saved.

He hears the word of faith, he has faith and confesses, and he is saved and sealed. The deal is done. No works were involved, and the sin-debt is paid for. Now, only now – after this act – can a person turn from his sin and be a fruitful member of the body of Christ.

*With what will you come before the Lord?
What will you present for the sin of your soul?
What will bring you the great reward?
On what thing will you, your sins roll?*

*Shall you accomplish a great and noble deed?
Claiming it is worthy of His praise?
Shall giving up a wicked life or one of greed...
Bring you honor, blessing, and eternal days?*

*Rather, come to your God in faith of His grace
Come to Him with hands empty of any pride
By grace through faith alone will you see His smiling face
And through that alone will you in heaven reside*

II. Lordship Salvation

Many have heard of John MacArthur. He is well known, articulate, and a great presenter of the Bible. However, he – at least at one time and maybe still – taught what is known as “Lordship Salvation.”

It is certain that if you ask John MacArthur if he believes in Sola Fide and Sola Gratia – Salvation by faith and salvation by grace as conveyed by Paul in Ephesians 2:8, 9 – he will certainly say, “Yes.” Only a fool would not do so, and he is not a fool.

But if he still teaches Lordship salvation, then – like Ray Comfort – he proclaims a false gospel which adds to the three simple sets of verses we cited above, meaning from 1 Corinthians 15, Romans 10, and Ephesians 1. Putting what he says side by side with Paul’s gospel, as we now will, then shows us the problem with his theology.

First, the question must be asked, “Is it sufficient to only believe in Christ according to the gospel in order to be saved, or is it also necessary that He is accepted as Lord in order to be saved?”

In this, there is the obvious secondary question of “What does ‘Lord’ mean?” The Lordship view of salvation, as taught by John MacArthur, says that in order to be saved one must accept Christ as Lord (meaning Master), as well as Savior from sin, in order to be saved.

John MacArthur says Lordship salvation is “the view that for salvation a person must trust Jesus Christ as Savior from sin and must also commit himself to Christ as Lord of his life, submitting to his sovereign authority” (MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, pp 33-34).

This is not the gospel. The gospel is clear and has been presented already. Several problems with what MacArthur says involve – as many such false teachings do – a misunderstanding of the context of what the Bible is presenting.

When Jesus said, for example, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46), who was He speaking to? He was speaking to Israel. It was Israel, still under the law, and prior to His crucifixion. The plan of salvation was not complete.

To mix what is said in the synoptic gospels with what is said in the epistles will inevitably – not just maybe or sometimes – lead to faulty doctrine. Jesus was instructing Israel under the law. The law was a tutor to lead the people to Him.

What Jesus says in that context may apply later in another context, or it may not. But if it conflicts with the epistles, then it obviously does not. But the context of pre- and post-crucifixion/resurrection is not the same, and the intent of the words spoken during those different times, those different dispensations, falls under those different contexts. An example would be Luke 21:36 –

“Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

When one comes to Christ, he is saved. There is no need to pray beyond that to be counted worthy. The believer is imputed Christ’s righteousness and is made worthy, not because of himself or what he will do, but because of Christ and what He has done. Rather, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12 –

“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of

faith with power, ¹² that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul doesn't pray that we will be worthy to stand before Christ, but that we will be worthy of the calling with which we have been called. The deal is done, but the state of the person in his new position is ongoing. John MacArthur fails to make this distinction. Some of the problems with Lordship salvation are:

1. Salvation and discipleship are confused. One cannot make Christ Lord until one knows what that entails, which is *not* a provision of the simple gospel which we have already stated. Further, if one never gets a Bible and has no Bible teaching after his salvation, he can *never*, be obedient in this way. Never.
 - We are so heaped up with Bibles and supposed experts of the Bible, that we think our way is the way it always has been and the way it is everywhere. But this is not the case. Without a Bible, which includes almost all Christians of history – until the rather recent past, and which continues in most of the world today – we can have no idea what we are expected to do.
2. It places the necessity of doing works (which accompany submitting to Christ's Lordship) as a condition of receiving the gift of salvation. This is something which is not required according to the gospel. It is contrary to the gospel, and thus it is a false gospel. A gift cannot be earned; hence, the term “gift.”
3. It mixes what is implicit in having, and growing in, faith (such as obedience) with what is explicitly necessary to be saved. It adds to the simple gospel, and thus, it is a false gospel.
4. Like Roman Catholicism, it overstates the connection between faith and works by elevating works to being a part of the gospel, claiming there is an inevitable connection between them – which there is not, as is seen, for example, in 2 Peter 1–

“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” 2 Peter 1:5-9

- This same logic is not unique to 2 Peter, and it dispels the false notion of the false gospel of Lordship salvation presented by John MacArthur.
5. It stereotypes the Bible's view of grace, which is unmerited favor (how can grace be anything but free?), by labeling it "easy believism." But the apostles taught that one is saved by belief. Call it whatever you will – easy believism, apple pie, or the path to restoration, it doesn't change what the Bible says. John MacArthur attacks the true gospel with name-calling in order to promote his false gospel.
 6. It fails to recognize that there is a distinction between justification and sanctification. Each has its place and one is not exclusive of the other.
 7. Lordship salvation makes faithfulness to Christ to the end, meaning perseverance, a condition of knowing that one is saved. 1 Corinthians 3 and 5, and 2 Corinthians 5 (which deal with rewards and losses and earthly punishment) explicitly dispel any notion of this false concept.
 - Further, it calls into question the sovereign decrees of God by saying that they can then change or be revoked. In other words, if a person is sealed with the Holy Spirit upon belief as a guarantee, and then that is revoked, it means that 1) God has changed His sovereign decree, 2) He has made an error in the first place, and 3) His guarantee of eternal life is not a guarantee at all. In short, it portrays God as not all-knowing, that He is vacillating, and that His word is not to be trusted.
 8. Despite point 7, it inconsistently admits that a true and saved believer can be a "secret" believer and even be "backslidden" for an extended period.

Finally, concerning this failed system, the words of Paul in Romans 10 cannot be used to justify Lordship salvation. There, as stated before, Paul says –

"...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

That is not speaking of making Christ Lord of one's life, in the sense of, "Master, I will obey every precept of Yours if you will save me." This is speaking of an entirely different precept, the deity of Jesus Christ.

The word “That” is a conjunction being used to tie together this verse with the thought in the preceding verse, “the word of faith.” This “word of faith” is explained by Paul and is what he preached. It is the means of obtaining “the righteousness of faith” mentioned in verse 10:6.

From there, he says, “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus...” Confession is more than the audible words which occur with the mouth. To “confess” is synonymous with to “profess.” One can confess a lie, but one only professes the truth.

The word is *homologēsēs* and the concept of agreement is to be found within it. The audible confession stands because of the inward profession. This is why Paul said in verse 10:8 that “the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” It is as close to us as the air which enters and exits our mouth and fills our lungs, and it is both audible in tone and truthful to the heart.

The reason for the audible profession is obvious. No one would hide their true belief in the Lordship of Jesus. If He is in fact Lord, then He is alive. If He is alive, then He triumphed over the cross. If He did this, then He was without sin because “the wages of sin is death.” If He is without sin, then He is Lord, meaning Yehovah, and thus God because “all have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God.”

As you can see by logically thinking this through, the incarnation of Jesus Christ – being the God/Man – is inextricably tied up in the confession of “the Lord Jesus.” One cannot deny His Lordship, meaning His deity, and be saved. This is the heart of what God has done in the stream of time for the redemption of mankind.

Therefore, confession “with your mouth” is the making of an open profession that Jesus is God, thus denying all other gods. This would have been particularly of note in Roman times when people within the empire were required to affirm the lordship of Caesar. For many, it was a life and death decision to call Jesus “Lord.” Most translations, rather than stating “the Lord Jesus” will say “Jesus is Lord.” This is to avoid confusion and to emphasize His Lordship; His deity.

Either way, one must make the confession which is a true profession as is seen in the words “and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead.” Paul directly ties the resurrection to Jesus’ Lordship. One cannot honestly call on a dead savior and so acknowledging His resurrection returns us to the thought that He was sinless in His life and death. Peter explains this in his great discourse at Pentecost in Acts 2 -

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” Acts 2:22-24

Peter says, it was “not possible” that death should hold Jesus because He is without sin, and death is the penalty for sin. To ensure we don't miss the point, immediately before and after stating this, Peter turned to Scripture and spoke of the Lord (Yehovah) in a way which implied that Jesus is Yehovah.

Therefore, calling on Jesus is calling on Yehovah, but the reciprocal is not necessarily true. If one accepts the premise that Yehovah of the Old Testament is realized in Jesus of the New, then he has rightly called on the name of the Lord.

However, if such people stubbornly refuse to see what God has done through Jesus, fulfilling the Old Testament pictures related to Yehovah which pointed to Him, then they have not called on the Lord Jesus, meaning Yehovah. It is an important point which should not be missed.

And so, this belief in God's raising Jesus from the dead is the crucial key to understanding His Personhood. It is a volitional act of the free-will, which itself is a gift of God.

Faith isn't something which can be earned; it is something which is received from God and then exercised by man. This doesn't mean God grants us the faith to believe and that we will *then* believe. It means that God grants us the faith to believe and we *may* believe.

This is no different than God granting us the ability to accomplish mathematical skills. We may choose to use this ability or not. Maybe a better example would be the ability to swim. Swimming is possible for any normally constructed person, but it does take a step of faith to actually exercise the ability.

The ability is given by God, but it doesn't mean that the choice will be exercised. Faith is not earned, it is received, and then it must be put into practice. Once the faith is properly applied, “you will be saved.”

This follows through with the very idea of belief. There are different meanings to the word "believe." One can know that Christians say Jesus is God, fully comprehending what that means, and simply not believe it is true. Jehovah's Witnesses do this all the time.

Or, one can believe that Jesus is God, and not believe in Jesus as God – in other words, submit to that fact. A person could say, "I have done the study and I truly believe that the gospel is true, but I just don't accept it for me. I want nothing to do with Jesus."

Or, one can hear the word, believe it is true, and by faith appropriate that truth for himself. The difference between the second two comes down to willingness to believe and confess, as Paul says is necessary in Romans 10:9, 10. John gives us a case of exactly this difference in John 12 –

"Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

-John 12:42, 43

John uses the same word that Paul uses in Romans 10. Therefore, the confession is not a work, but a yielding to God. Without the confession, the grace of God cannot be appropriated, because the faith has not truly been exercised.

But this process has nothing to do with the MacArthur false gospel of making Jesus Lord, meaning "Master," of one's life and submitting to His sovereign authority. That is a step outside of the bounds of the one, true, and simple gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

This is why the term "easy-believeism" is such an offense. It is God who reads the heart. But proponents of MacArthur's false gospel arrogantly place themselves in His place and head right back to the Roman Catholic model by indicating that you have to prove your faith (which God has accepted) to them. God reads the heart, and our submission to Christ will be in accord with our life after coming to Christ - whatever that life may be. The rewards and losses will be ours alone. But those things have nothing to do with the reception of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our obedience to Christ, after being saved, has nothing to do with the salvation that is provided. A wife may submit to her husband, or she may not. And indeed, every wife on this planet does so differently. But the wife is no less a wife based on her submission.

She is a wife based on the proclamation made between the two. The categories are not to be mixed.

These two points of faulty theology, Ray Comfort's "The Way of the Master," and John MacArthur's "Lordship Salvation," are but two of the many faulty doctrines which claim they believe in Sola Fide and Sola Gratia, but which belie that confession through confused theology.

Turning from sin, and submission to Christ as Lord, are both precepts which are found in the epistles, but they are *not conditions* for salvation. Rather, they are precepts which should, but do not naturally, stem from salvation.

Those things fall under an entirely different category of doctrine – that of rewards and losses. Those are explained, in particular, in 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5. In keeping our categorical boxes straight, we will avoid the error that these men of God fell into.

In future sermons, we will expand on something that was stated here today concerning the possibility or impossibility of one losing his salvation. The question is, "Is salvation eternal, or can one lose his salvation?" The answer is obvious, but it is one which is denied by countless strange teachings which normally arise by the simple mistake of taking verses out of their intended context.

Having said that, and to prepare you for our sermon next week on predestination and election, and then a coming sermon on security in salvation, we can at least say that the doctrine ties necessarily into what we have talked about today – that of salvation being of grace alone through faith alone. Why is that?

It is because if a person can lose his salvation, it is obviously not because of something God has done. He has sent Christ, He has provided the salvation, and it is offered freely, as a gift of grace. As grace is unmerited favor, then anything added to that cannot be considered grace.

Therefore, as losing one's salvation cannot be because of something God has done, then it is something that the saved man has done. And if the man must do something to keep being saved, then he – by default – had to do something to be saved – which takes us right back to Ray Comfort and John MacArthur and their false-gospels. Therefore, to teach that one can lose his salvation is a denial of salvation by grace through faith.

In fact, it is the ultimate slap in God's face. God sent His Son to die for all sins of man – past, present, and future. It must be so because God is outside of time. His decrees are sovereign and when they are made, they stand. To say that one must do some work to be saved or to keep being saved is to say that what God did was insufficient to save at all.

Let us never be found in such an unholy and pridefully blasphemous position in our walk before the Lord our God. Rather, let us have faith and trust in the grace of God for our salvation, and let us hold fast to the truth of Scripture, even if it means we may lose friends or family in the process.

It is better to stand on right doctrine, than to listen to the ear-tickling but false gospels which permeate society, and which call us away from the magnificence of what God has done for us through the giving of His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” Ephesians 1:3-6*

GOD'S PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION IN CHRIST

Exodus 9:13-16

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me, ¹⁴for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. ¹⁵Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. ¹⁶But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.'"

In our last sermon, we looked into the doctrine of being saved by grace alone through faith alone. This, as we saw, does not mean that we must first make Christ Lord of our lives (MacArthur's Lordship salvation). Logically, that cannot happen until one is saved. It is faulty logic based on a faulty premise.

We also cannot logically repent of sin prior to our conversion in the way that Ray Comfort of The Way of the Master presents. It is true, we are sinful beings, and we need a Savior. But to repent of sins as Ray Comfort states then implies that we know all of that which is considered sinful, turning from all of that, and only then can we be saved. This too is faulty logic.

We turn from sin as we discover that which is displeasing to God, and that comes from discipleship, not calling on Christ by faith to receive the gift of salvation which God offers in Him.

Both of those teachings were shown to be faulty because they present a faulty view of the simple gospel – salvation by faith alone through grace alone. But what is the process provided by God that even gets us to that point? And once we arrive at that point, what are the results of the act of salvation which God provides?

These doctrines, those of predestination, election, and that of the security of the believer, are major doctrines. Today we will look at predestination and election. Next week, we will look at the security of the believer.

However, these are not separate in the mind of God, as we will see today. Each point of doctrine leads logically and absolutely to the next because of the very nature of God.

That they are combined, is seen in the words of Paul to the Romans in a single verse, Romans 8:30, but for more context, we will give you both verses, 29 and 30...

Text Verse: *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Romans 8:29, 30*

Paul speaks of being foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified – all in just two verses. Each of these five verbs is in the same tense – aorist, indicative, active. In essence, the act is defined at a particular moment, it is past, and its effects are ongoing.

Today, we will look at some of the mechanics of what this means for the individual who is to be saved by God through Jesus Christ. Be advised, though, that no matter what is said in the next few minutes, another ten volumes of commentary could be added to each point, and there would still be someone who says, “But you didn’t cover this verse in Romans,” or “Why didn’t you mention that particular point.”

The study is vast, and it takes a lifetime of pursuit. So, please don’t think that every “i” has been crossed or every “t” has been dotted... Wait! reverse that, please. This is just a short talk to hopefully encourage you to desire more. Because there is ever so much more to be desired in His superior word. And so, let’s turn to that precious word once again, and may God speak to us His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

God’s Predestination and Election in Christ

Paul says that believers are predestined, and they are called. The Greek word, *proorizó*, translated as “predestined” means “to mark out beforehand.” It comes from the preposition *pro*, meaning before, in front of, and so on, and also the verb *horizó*, meaning to mark off by boundaries or determine. You can see the English word “horizon” in it. One might think of “pre-horizon,” and thus “pre-determined.”

God has “pre-determined” those who will be saved. But what does that mean? Did God actively choose each before creation as in, “I will make a Charlie Garrett, and I will save him”? If this is so, does He then say, “I will make a Joseph Stalin and I will condemn him”?

Or does God say, “I will make a path to salvation. This is the predetermined boundary, and any who accept that path will be saved”? Or, is there some variation between these that God will use to save man?

One thing is for sure, Paul says believers are predestined, and so there is no reason to argue if this is true or not. What needs to be established is what that actually means, and how it comes about. The importance of why this needs to be known translates directly into the nature of God – His love, His competence, His trustworthiness, and so forth.

It also translates directly into what the believer needs to do in salvation, and even after salvation – both in regard to his salvation, and in regard to his obligation to others for their salvation.

In order to understand at least a small part of predestination and election, we will go over various views on what is involved in them. To do this, we will repeat points already covered in earlier sermons from the books of Moses, and in several Bible studies that some of you have already attended or watched.

However, as this is a series on doctrine, the repetition is necessary, and it will – hopefully – be a good refresher for those of you who have already heard these things before. So, no napping and sit up straight.

Paul’s words of Romans 8:29, 30 are a result of his statement in 8:28 about all things being worked out for good for those who are the called according to His purpose.

Based on this, he says that those whom God “foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Those who are a part of God’s plans and purposes *will be* conformed. It is already done in God’s mind. How does this come about?

Four main views will be presented – supralapsarianism, infralapsarianism, sublapsarianism, and Wesleyanism. Despite being mentally challenging and a bit complicated, we can simplify the big words for your mind by using easier examples for you to grasp.

In the past, I have used ducks in a pond which then flows into a river. That was so that people wouldn’t quack their heads by thinking too hard. Today, we shall use real people stuck in the same dilemma. The wrong views will be explained first, who believes them, and why.

*The first view is known as ***Supralapsarianism*** (supra - above). It says that election, or predestination, is logically prior to the decree to permit the fall of man. In other words, even before sin entered into the picture, election was made for all people. The big word is more easily understood from its parts – Supra-above. Lapse-fall. Ism-doctrine. This is the doctrine of “before the fall.”

This view involves a group known as hyper-Calvinists. It is also known as *double-predestination* because its effects actively go in two directions. It is radical and biblically unsound. It inevitably leads to judgmental egoists who feel God loves them and hates everyone else.

The reason for this is because their assumption is that God predestined humanity *before* He permitted the fall of man. Therefore, He actively *elected* some for salvation and actively *elected* others for condemnation. The fall hasn’t even happened, and He has made His choice.

In His act of creation, He purposefully created with the intent that His people would either be saved or condemned. That is their state and they have no choice in the matter.

This means that God provides and applies salvation only for the elect. This is known as *limited atonement*. Christ’s atonement is limited only to those who were elected, and it applies – both potentially and actually – only to certain people. Another term must be applied to those who are saved and those who are unsaved – *forced salvation* to the one, and *purposeful condemnation* to the other.

To explain, we can look at the Garden of Eden where God placed man. God created both the garden and the man. The man was placed in the garden, and even before the man has done anything wrong, God has already chosen which of his descendants He will love and which He will hate.

Only after this decision, this one man and his wife disobey. In this, the catastrophe of sin entered into the realm. Man was forced from the garden into a stream of existence, one generation leading to the next. However, that stream leads away from the garden to the abyss of hell – complete, total, and eternal separation from God.

But, during the course of time, God actively comes along and initiates a process of salvation for those He chose to save even before any wrong had been committed. He gives them his Spirit and seals them for future glory whether they want it or not. The choice was made even before the fall, and they were saved at that point in time. The

work of Jesus *may* be a part of this process, but it is actually an afterthought in the stream of events.

And the ones He created for condemnation, He actively withholds His saving of them, forcing them into condemnation and hell because He chose them to be created for condemnation. This is a mean and angry God who actively hates some of His creation, the non-elect, even before He created them.

If you think about it, for those who espouse this doctrine, there is absolutely no reason to evangelize anyone. Why bother telling anyone about Jesus or sending out missionaries? God chose and that's that. And more, why go to church or read your Bible? If you are elect, there is nothing needed by you in regard to that nonsense. So, live it up, elect!

It ascribes evil to God because the evil that exists is not attempted to be corrected by Him when it could have been corrected by Him, even by those who may have desired it.

This view, double predestination, was held by the first Calvinist, John Calvin. In his Institutes of the Christian Religion, Chapter 21, Section 5, he states –

“All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death.” -John Calvin

Such is the view of the first Calvinist, and it is a heretical view of what God is doing in the stream of human existence.

*The second incorrect view is ***Infralapsarianism*** (infra - below). This concept says that the decree of election, meaning to call someone to salvation, is logically after the decree to permit the fall. This is held by strong Calvinists, but it is technically not double-predestination.

In essence, God created all and then He permitted the fall of man. Since then, He has and will continue to elect some and will pass by others. He provides, and applies, salvation only for the elect. He chooses who will be saved and they have no choice in the matter.

Traditional Calvinists such as RC Sproul, John Piper, and others, are in this category. This view still holds to limited atonement like the first view. Christ's atonement is limited

only to those who were elected and it applies – both potentially and actually – only to certain people who will be saved. To the saved, it is *forced salvation*, and to the unsaved we could use the term *uncaring condemnation*.

We'll go back to the Garden of Eden to understand. God creates the Garden and the man. After this, man disobeyed, and the catastrophe of sin entered into the realm. It is at this time that God decides who He will save and who He will simply ignore.

In the meantime, man is forced from the garden into a stream of existence, one generation leading to the next. But that stream leads away from the garden to the abyss of hell – complete and total separation from God.

During this course of time, God actively comes along and initiates a process of salvation for some of these people. He gives them his Spirit and seals them for future glory whether they want it or not. The rest, He simply ignores. He does nothing to secure their salvation.

They were simply not a part of His plan. One might argue that this isn't a hateful God, but that is incorrect. He is uncaring about those He didn't elect, and to not care about their eternal state is an unloving act.

He made the choice for salvation or condemnation after the fall, but He also did so *before* He actually took any action to correct the matter. Thus, the cross is an afterthought in God's redemptive plans and purposes. In His mind, they were saved before His decree to correct their state. Like the first view, the work of Jesus *may* be a part of this process, but it is actually a secondary thought in the stream of events.

There is an implicit problem with this view which brings it to the same level as the first view. God is all-knowing. The order of the occurrences as I am presenting are for our benefit and understanding, but they are not actually how God's mind see things. He knows all things at all times. To state that God didn't actually create some for salvation and some for condemnation in this view would be a hard sell.

In both views so far, God loves only the elect *in terms of salvation*. The others, He either actively hates, or He simply doesn't care about them. Which, by default, is a hateful act.

Another problem with this is that God is love – He loves everyone equally. There is no increase or decrease in His love for us from His perspective. The Bible proclaims this. But to pass over some while choosing others, especially *after* finally providing the means of

salvation to the world, is actually no different than actively condemning them. Both views present an unloving God towards the non-elect.

This “passing by” someone, when He knew before creating them that He would “pass them by” is actually more than uncaring. It shows a disdain for a certain portion of His creatures. Calvinists like to say that those who are not elect are “simply not a part of His plan,” and that may be true, but it is He – not the poor soul who might want to be – who determines it is so.

In order to justify this, many verses have to be taken out of context, and entire doctrines which are, in fact, taught in Scripture – such as free will – have to be dismissed. By denying free will in the process of salvation, Calvinists then supposedly remove this stain from God, as they view Him.

Like the first view, there is no reason why someone would bother telling anyone else about Jesus or sending out missionaries. They will dispute this, but it is the logical result of such a view. If God chooses us for salvation apart from our will – and even before He has initiated the plan for man’s salvation – then honestly, what is the point? Are God’s plans going to be thwarted by us somehow?

Further, proponents of this faulty view would say that if it was intended for all to be saved, then all would be saved – because God’s sovereign intentions must come about. God is, after all, sovereign – as we saw in a previous sermon. Therefore, if it was not *intended* for all to be saved, then it was only intended for some, meaning the elect.

This is a fallacy of thinking known as a false dilemma. The atonement of Jesus is an offering and it is *intended* to save all, but it only applies salvation for those who believe – as 2 Peter 3:9 states explicitly –

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

Calvinism wrongly assumes, and therefore asserts, that the atonement of Jesus has only one purpose, which is to secure the salvation of the elect. In other words, Jesus died so that we can be saved. This is incorrect.

It can be inferred that Jesus’ sacrifice, according to Romans 1:32, has another purpose – to reveal the righteousness of God in judgment. God sends His Son to die in your place,

but you turn Him down. Even without the cross, we are condemned. How much more just is God in judgment because of it!

The result of the idea of limited atonement is that it denies that God really desires all people to be saved. This is contrary to His omni-benevolence and also to what Peter wrote, as inspired by God, and which God included in His infallible word.

To understand this view more clearly, one needs to consider the concept of free-will. Do we freely choose Christ, or does God choose us apart from our will? The two options are known as monergism and synergism.

*****Monergism***, or Unconditional Election, teaches that regeneration is completely the result of God's work and man has no part or cooperation in it. It is salvation by irresistible grace leading to regeneration and then to faith. In other words, if thought through logically, a person is saved before he is saved. This is in accord with the two models we have already discussed – supra- and infralapsarianism.

To justify this, Calvinist doctrine says that one is born again by the Spirit. After that occurs, they then choose Christ Jesus, and then they are saved. In other words, being "born again" is not salvation, but rather an intermediate step on the road to salvation.

One could paraphrase that by saying, "Nobody has freewill unto salvation, but God chooses a person to be saved, gives them freewill to choose through regeneration (being born again) and then he uses that free will of choice to be saved.

But if they have free will to choose after being born again, and they cannot use it to reject Christ, then it really isn't free will. Rather, it is "forced will." Calvinism is convoluted and it involves very unclear thinking and a twisting of the Bible.

Further, this view actually usurps God. If you have no choice in your salvation, then how do you know you are saved? How can anyone make a claim that they are saved when they didn't have anything to do with their salvation? In other words, you are speaking *for God* by claiming salvation at all.

Of course, an answer might be, "I believed after regeneration; therefore, I am saved." However, there are false gospels and people believe them. There are people who believe wrongly and yet claim they are saved. When they find out they are wrong, they change their belief (hopefully) in order to be saved. So, when were they saved? When they believed correctly!

But Calvinism says they were saved by God's predetermined will, even before they were created. So why did they go through the times of falsely believing they were saved. What exactly was God doing with them at that time? If He wasn't doing something with them at that time, then they had to have been freely choosing to do what they were doing. Hence, they had free will in the matter.

False gospels imply there is a true gospel and the spirit of the antichrist implies that there is a true Spirit. Belief *must* precede regeneration. And it does. This is what the Bible teaches. Your faith brings salvation. Finally, monergism denies free will in fallen man, but free will is necessary for love because forced love isn't love at all. And if you are forced to will, then you are not freely loving.

****Synergism**, or Conditional Election, on the other hand, teaches that we freely choose Christ and then are regenerated to life. This is exactly what the Bible teaches numerous times, both by Jesus' words as well as the apostolic writings –

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 3:13,14

An argument against this though is that the Bible says we are dead in our sins and that it is Jesus who restores us to life. The argument is, “How can a dead person choose life?” RC Sproul, who is now dead, basically says it this way – “You have as much power to awaken yourself from spiritual death as a corpse has the power to awaken himself from physical death.”

This is a fallacy, or an error in thinking, known as a category mistake. We are *spiritually* dead in our sins. We are not dead beings. God made us with the ability to reason, to choose, and to decline. In fact, this is exactly what Genesis 3:22 implies –

“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever...’” Genesis 3:22

Just because we are totally depraved beings, incapable of saving ourselves, it does not mean that we cannot see the good and receive it. People always strive towards what they perceive is good. And this is what Jesus came to do, to lead us as a beacon back to God. As He said Himself –

“He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. ⁴⁵ And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. ⁴⁶ I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.” John 12:44-46

Christ is the Beacon, and man comes to God through Him. Nobody in his right mind who has read the Bible accurately assumes that he can restore himself to life. Only Christ can do that. He has done all that we need for that to happen. We simply receive it, and He accomplishes the rest. Peter speaks of this synergistic model in 1 Peter 3 –

“There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 3:21

There, he uses the word *suneidésis*, translated as “conscience.” It is a compound of *syn*, meaning “together with” and *eídō*, meaning “to know or see.” It provides a look into the idea of synergism.

It is a word used frequently by Paul that signifies joint-knowing. In other words, man has a “...*conscience* which joins moral and spiritual consciousness as part of being created in the divine image. Accordingly, *all* people have this God-given capacity to know right from wrong because each is a *free moral agent*” (HELPS Word Studies).

Peter says that man uses this God-given capacity, acknowledges what God has done through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he is saved. As man is a free moral agent, and as his conscience must work out an acceptable faith in the work of Christ – a work which culminated in His resurrection – then it shows that man is not regenerated in order to believe as Calvinism wrongly states.

Rather, man’s free will must actively reason out his state before God, see that he is lost in a world of filth (meaning moral unrighteousness), and come into the Ark of Safety, which is the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and thus be saved.

The faith in Christ leads to the “baptism” which is the demand, or question, by which God answers – “Am I right before God?” The answer is, “Yes.” It is Christ who allows this to occur.

Mixing categories, and rejecting core doctrines of the Bible – as Calvinism does – leads to bad theology, such as monergism. To understand the doctrine of free will better go back and watch our Genesis 2 sermon entitled Free to Will or Not Free to Will.

The Bible teaches what we would call *anthropological hylomorphism* – we are a soul/body unity. The spirit of man is dead, but the spirit of man is tied to the soul. Paul, speaking to saved believers in 2 Corinthians 5, says the soul without a body is naked. The spirit of man is made alive when we call on Christ, even if the body later dies.

This is eternal life, and it occurs the moment we believe. We don’t become a soul/body/spirit unity. Rather it is our soul which is now spiritually alive. Adam’s spirit died at the fall, faith in Christ regenerates that spirit. As I said, the spirit of antichrist which John speaks of confirms this.

The third wrong concept of our four major categories is **Wesleyanism** – named after John Wesley. Jacob Prasch, who we mentioned in a previous sermon, is a proponent of this faulty view. It says that God’s election is based on His foreknowledge but not necessarily in accord with it. In other words, God’s decrees are conditional; He changes His mind.

This is the beginning of major error and it goes back to a guy named Jacob Arminius who lived in the 1500s. His view denies eternal security. It reveals a God who is changing and makes mistakes.

John Wesley couldn’t decide what was right and so he followed the teaching of Arminius after asking God for a sign and then throwing lots twice. But we don’t get our theology from happenstance and chance. Instead, we get it from the Bible.

John Wesley, the Methodists, the Church of God, Mennonites, and others who hold this view are wrong – frightfully wrong. Like the previous view, they believe that God created all and then permitted the fall. Then He provides salvation for *all people*.

God knows who the elect are based on the foreseen faith of those who believe. Because of this faith, He applies salvation only to believers, but believers *can lose* their salvation.

Going back to the Garden of Eden for an example of the folly of Wesleyanism:

God creates the garden and the man. The man disobeys God and the catastrophe of sin entered into the realm. Man is forced from the garden into a stream of existence, one generation leading to the next. However, that stream leads away from the garden to the abyss of hell – complete and total separation from God.

God, however, offers the corrective measure for man – He sends His Son to die for their sin. The Son calls out, “Come to Me and be saved.” Some never hear the message and continue through life without Christ. Some respond and come to Him. Others like the existence they are living and have no care about where their end will be, or they simply fail to believe what they hear, and they reject what God has offered.

For those who come to His Son, however, they can never know if they have upset God enough for Him to take away the salvation He has provided. They must keep doing things, or not doing things, in order to continue to be saved. If they fail in the doing, or not doing, God removes His salvation from them, and they are returned to the highway to hell.

There is never true safety, and in fact, those who are saved can’t really tell if they are saved or not from day to day. They spend their entire life trying to please a group of lower level pastors, preachers, and scholars who carefully decide what constitutes acceptance or rejection.

When God says in the book of Hebrews that those who believe have entered God’s rest, it is a conditional statement. When God says in the book of Ephesians that the seal of His Holy Spirit is a guarantee, it is so in name only. But a guarantee in name only is not a guarantee. In this, God – and what God says in His word – cannot be trusted.

Where Jesus says that hearing His word and believing in Him who sent Him results in 1) everlasting life, 2) that they will not come into judgment, and 3) that they have passed from death to life, does not really mean that. Jesus’ words are not to be taken at face value, but rather, they are conditional.

As this is so, one must earn his salvation, and thus salvation is not by grace through faith. This is a failed system of deceit which comes from a God who vacillates and changes. His decrees are conditional.

Understanding this, we can make a simple and logical refutation of Wesleyanism. First, there is actually no chronological order in the decrees of God. *We* put them in an understandable order for *our* benefit, but in God, there is no chronology.

He does not think in time or in sequence. Rather, God knows everything immediately and intuitively. All thoughts in God are simultaneous, and so chronological thinking is therefore excluded. However, there is an operational order in what God has done.

He has willed all things to occur in the temporal sequence of time. One thing happens and then another. We know that God created first. Only after creation came the fall of man. Only after the fall did God then begin to explain His plan of redemption. That plan slowly unfolded in the stream of time.

In this, we can think of a person getting sick. Once sick, a plan is made to bring him back to health, the doctor writes a prescription, and if the man follows what has been prescribed, he will get well. But this plan is unfolded for our benefit. What God has decreed is eternal –

“All of God’s attributes, thoughts, and decisions are eternal in accord with one another, and none is logically dependent on or independent of another. If it were, there would be contradictory logical sequence in a God who has no multiplicity, not even in His thoughts.” Norman Geisler

God provides salvation. Man accepts the prescription which has been filled out for him. The man is saved. The man is sealed with the Holy Spirit. The salvation is eternal. Each decree is eternal, none is taken out of the whole, but is in accord with the whole, and man is saved. That corresponds wholly and accurately to Paul’s words of Romans 8:29, 30 which was our text verse today.

Our final view is what is correct:

First, it makes sense from a philosophic standpoint. Second, it makes sense from a moral standpoint. And third, it is the only view which is supported by the Bible. It also answers the question of why we fell in the first place.

Further, it answers where evil came from without ever ascribing it to God. Without this view, one is forever searching for where evil came from. This is a question that Calvinists must, and do, ask. They can never find an answer to it because their theology leaves no room for it.

Their mistaken idea is that God created everything perfect and so if man fell, then God must have blown it by creating a being that could fall. This is especially true because if intent to sin is evil (as Jesus clearly says it is), then Adam fell before the fall because he lusted after the fruit before he ate it. But they know God didn't create evil, so – as RC Sproul is noted for asking – “Whence comes evil?”

As a short and logical reason for free will in Adam, it is obvious that what Adam did involved self-determination. That Adam sinned can be taken as an axiom. But was it caused by another, meaning it was determined; was it uncaused, meaning it is undetermined; or was it caused by himself, meaning self-determined?

We know that God did not cause him to sin, and the serpent did not force him to sin. So, it was not determined.

As far as Adam himself, there was no lack in him concerning the matter at hand. What he possessed in himself as created by God was perfect. Though he did not possess the knowledge of good and evil, that was not an imperfection. A lack does not necessarily correlate to, or imply, imperfection.

Adam was given a command which he could obey. He simply did not. As there is no such thing as an uncaused action, the action was not undetermined. The answer to “Whence comes evil?” is that it was self-determined by Adam.

For our views on predestination and election, the correct view is ***sublapsarianism*** (sub, meaning under or after). In order of decrees, God's order to provide salvation came before His order to elect the people of the world, as the Bible reveals in Revelation 13:8 where it calls Jesus “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

“I will send My Son to die, and then all who call on Him will be saved.” It provides *unlimited atonement* for everyone *potentially*, but only for God's people who choose Christ *actually*. Thus, it is unlimited atonement, potential; limited atonement, actual.

Like the previous two views, this view holds that God created all and then permitted the fall of man before election. He provides salvation for all people, but the elect of God are those who believe. God passes by those who do not believe based on their rejecting His offer of Jesus. It isn't that He doesn't care about them, it is that they don't care about Him.

This view *applies* salvation only to believers who cannot lose it. This is in accord with Scripture which reveals there is security, eternal security, in the arms of Christ. A theological basis for this view is that God is omni-benevolent. In other words, He loves all of the people of the world because He is love, as the Bible states.

There is no hatred of the person willing to come to Him, and no active passing by people. He offers to any and all who hear the message, and the elect respond. He desires all to come to Him for His unmerited salvation and favor. This doesn't mean there is good in us, it means we *see the good in Him* and we come to it – as the Bible states. Christ is the Light drawing all men unto Himself.

For a final, and correct visit to the Garden of Eden – God creates the garden and the man. The man disobeys God, and the catastrophe of sin enters into the realm. God, at this time, reveals that He will provide salvation for man – *before* He elects anyone to that salvation.

This is the order which is revealed in the Genesis 3 account. Man fell, God's curse came, but even during the curse, He promises a Redeemer. After that, Adam demonstrates faith in the promise by naming his wife *Khavah*, or life, and because of that act, God covers the man and the woman – a picture of man's atonement.

This pattern continues outside of the garden for those in the stream of existence, one generation leading to the next. The stream leads away from the garden to the abyss of hell and complete and total separation from God, it is true. Jesus said it is so in John 3:18-

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:18

God, however, offers the corrective measure for man – He first promises a Redeemer and those who believe are rewarded for their faith, such as Abraham. Eventually, He sends His Son to die for sin. The Son calls out, “Come to Me and be saved.”

Some respond and come to Him, others like the existence they are living and have no care about where their end will be. Or, they simply reject Him out of disbelief. Or, they are never told the message because a bunch of Calvinists who say that God's plans in salvation cannot be thwarted – and so it isn't necessary to share the gospel for people to

be saved – fail to get out and share the message of Christ. Or, for whatever other reason the word doesn't get out.

For those who come to His Son, they move from condemnation to salvation. They move from hell to heaven. They move from mortality to immortality. They are further protected from themselves by Christ, even if they fail Him along the way.

They are clothed in Christ, they are no longer imputed sin, and therefore, they cannot die again, because “the wages of sin is death,” but death comes through sin. If sin is not imputed, death no longer reigns. And, as a witness to them that this is true, God's word says that they are sealed with a guarantee – not a crummy Wesleyan Arminian guarantee that doesn't amount to a hill of beans, but the guarantee of God in Christ.

God was pleased that they believed. He saved them, and He continues to save them, even if they may have forgotten it. Peter even says that can happen in 2 Peter 1:9. A person can go so far away from God that he can forget he was ever saved, but God never does. God's redeemed are eternally secure because of what He has done, not because of what we may do or fail to do.

God even gives us examples of people who either commit such grievous sin that what they do is worse than anything Paul can describe among the Gentile nations, or who completely shipwreck their faith, and yet Paul uses terminology saying that they are saved, and they will remain saved, yet as through fire. Meaning they will suffer great loss at their judgment.

Concerning predestination and election, the first two views hold to salvation only for the elect. The third view holds to salvation for *believers* but that they can lose it. The correct view holds to salvation for believers, who are the elect, even though it is offered to all – and when that is accepted it is a done deal, the salvation cannot be lost.

This will be the subject of our next sermon entitled “Once Saved Always Saved? Or, Not So!” There is ample biblical support for salvation being offered, free will in the process, and also of eternal salvation. Any verses which appear to contradict these views are taken out of context by the theologically confused Christian.

John 6:44, for example, is a boilerplate verse used by Calvinists to deny that one can come to Christ through free will. It says –

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:44

“See, you have no free will to come to Christ! See!” Wrong! The problem with using this verse for saying that one does not have free will in salvation is at least two-fold. First, it rejects the context of what Jesus relayed to the people. His words were based on the argument he had begun to build in John 5. There He said –

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” John 5:39, 40

God *had* drawn them, through His word, for about 1500 years. However, they were unwilling to accept the word and failed to come to Christ. When Jesus said that no one can come to Him unless the Father who sent Christ draws him, that is true.

Nobody can come to Christ apart from the word of God. Paul says as much in Romans 10 – “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Paul goes on to show in the next four verses that God did, in fact, draw them, and He continues to do so today.

The problem isn’t the drawing by God. The problem is the rejection by the people. This is without a doubt, because, secondly, John 12:32 – which comes after John 6 – says the following:

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

God draws all men to Himself through His word, and it is His word which tells of the cross of Christ, by which Christ will draw all people to Himself, and thus all people to God. Likewise, this goes for John 15 where Jesus says –

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” John 15:16

NEWS FLASH: Jesus was speaking to His disciples. The entire chapter deals solely and only with them. He said the same to them in John 6:70. He chose them. Such verses cannot be used to justify God electing people apart from their free-will.

Predestination is what God has done for the people of the world by sending Christ. When they receive that, they are a part of God's predestination. Election is God's calling in Christ. This comes about when one hears God's message of salvation and responds to the call. When this occurs, the man is justified. And when that occurs, the man is glorified.

In God's mind, these are eternal decrees which came about through His will being expressed in the temporal sequence of time. Our response to them results in an action which is not conditional, but which is fixed and forever.

To further solidify this, we will spend next week looking at the doctrine of eternal salvation as a separate doctrine. But you can see from what has been submitted today, they are only separate in our minds, not in God's. This is something that will be confirmed in our closing verse.

As I said at the beginning of this sermon, we could go on and on, for hours, and yet someone will find a reason why I should have also addressed this particular precept, or this particular verse. There is no end to the learning that can be done.

What matters concerning this sermon is not the content which is not provided, but the content which is. And that which you have been provided is accurate, it is logical, and it is in accord with the word of God. Please be sure to now take this information, and use it as a basis for going forward and analyzing the countless other precepts which this short sermon did not include due to its time limitations.

Closing Verse: *"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:11-14

“ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED?” OR, “NOT SO!”

Psalm 71:14-16

“But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
¹⁵ My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
¹⁶ I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.”

Each day begins for me by getting up and typing a commentary on a verse of the Bible. Right now, I am going through 2 Peter for the second time, refining the commentary I wrote many years ago. The day I typed this sermon, after typing the commentary, and before starting here, I went to emails to see if there was anything pressing, or if there was anything simple and which could be responded to in less than a minute or so.

There were a few quick emails to answer. The rest will have to wait. I’m sorry, but brevity is the key to getting a response from me. Type a long email, and you go to the back of the line for a response. What was propitious is that one of the short emails I responded to, and also the closing comments of the Bible commentary I typed, both fit into the content of today’s doctrine sermon. First, the email –

“Have you ever produced a salvation message geared to children? Or do you know of any?”

That was the entire email. May the Lord bless such brevity! My answer to him was –

“Not that I can remember. A reason why it shouldn't really be necessary is something I mentioned in the sermon we did at the church yesterday. The gospel is the epitome of simplicity – it tells what God did in Christ to restore us as is detailed in 1 Cor 15:3, 4 –

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4

That is the gospel message. So, just simply explain what it means – to the youngest child, or to the wisest professor. Christ died for our sins. “Have you ever disobeyed mom, or told a lie?” Any and all must acknowledge, “Yes” if truthful. “Jesus died for that. He was buried, proving He was dead, and He was raised - proving He had no sin. The sin He died for was yours, not His. As only God is without sin, then Jesus is God.”

That simple message is all that is needed. In fact, anything beyond that isn’t the gospel. Then you simply ask, “Do you believe that God did this for you? If “Yes,” then thank God for sending His Son and accept it as the full payment for what you have done wrong.”

That is all that is needed according to Scripture. Upon belief, the person is sealed with God’s Spirit as a guarantee of His salvation (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

And from my commentary on 2 Peter 1:15, in the “Life Application” section of the commentary, I said –

There are still thousands of unique languages without a copy of the Bible. Christian churches spend a great deal of money sending missionaries overseas to evangelize the lost. This is most noteworthy, but without a strong follow-up, only the people who originally hear the word will benefit. Therefore, it is important to not only tell of Jesus, but also to put in place safeguards so that the message will continue to be told. One way of doing this is schooling, raising up elders, and establishing churches. However, without a copy of the Bible, bad doctrine can easily creep in.

Likewise, missionaries from non-conforming sects such as the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses can come in and steal away the truth. To provide copies of the Bible in English is arrogant and presumptuous when it isn’t the native language of the people. Therefore, it has been the practice of faithful Christians throughout the ages to translate the Bible into the language of the natives.

What do these two thoughts – a question about salvation and an impetus to have both trained people and a copy of Scripture available to those who receive the gospel – have to do with one another?

Text Verse: *“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful*

in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”

-2 Peter 1:5-9

If the person who emailed me was wondering about a gospel message for children because he was wanting to evangelize his own child, then he was wanting to ensure that his child would call on Jesus and be saved. My answer, that the simple gospel is the only gospel, is true.

We don't need an elaborate presentation. We just present what the Bible presents and accept that what God has presented is reliable and effective. But what if this person told his child the gospel, then the child – we'll say one that is six years old – accepts the message, and then the person dies the next day. Without this Christian influence in the child's life, that child may go off on many unhealthy paths. He is a human, after all.

And what about the folks in the jungle of Papua New Guinea. A missionary comes into a village, tells the gospel, and the whole village gladly receives the good news of God in Christ. They all believe and are baptized – grateful for the salvation God has granted.

But, a week later, the missionary is eaten by a saltwater crocodile. After a year, a group of Mormons comes in, establishes a church based on Mormon doctrine, and everyone starts attending there. They had no discipleship beyond their conversion, and they had no copy of Scripture left in their native language. They have even, as Peter says, forgotten they were cleansed from their old sins.

What will happen to that child who received Christ by faith? What will happen to that village who gladly came to Christ? The answer you give will show just how much you understand, or fail to understand, several key words which the Bible uses, especially the meaning of the words “gift,” and “grace.” It will also reveal your understanding concerning several key concepts, such as the nature of God and the weight of His decrees.

The issue of whether one can lose his salvation or not is one of the most important issues that can be addressed in Scripture. It calls into question the truth of God in Christ, the surety possessed by any person who has been saved, and also the efficacy of what Jesus did – was it sufficient or not? This is not a minor issue, but it is the heart of the matter in salvation.

It must be addressed, and it must be faithfully answered. And it can be, right from the word of God. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again, and may God speak to us through His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Scriptural and Logical Reasons for Eternal Salvation

The gospel was stated in our opening comments. It is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 –

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Paul tells how to appropriate that in Romans 10:9, 10 –

“...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

That is the gospel and the means of receiving it in order to be saved. Paul also gives these words to show that there is nothing beyond that gospel which man must do, or indeed can do, in order to be saved –

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it* is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8, 9

Grace is unmerited favor. Anything – anything at all – which is added to grace negates grace. A gift is something that cannot be earned. It is something given without any strings attached, and it is something that once given away now belongs – wholly and entirely – to the recipient. A “gift” which is, or can be, recalled, is not a gift.

Paul then tells what the effects of salvation – of this gift – are in Ephesians 1:13, 14 –

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14

Paul says that upon belief a person is saved. When this happens, he is sealed with the Holy Spirit. The word for “sealed” is *sphragizó*. It “signifies *ownership* and the full *security* carried by the backing (full authority) of the owner. ‘Sealing’ in the ancient world served as a ‘legal signature’ which guaranteed the promise (contents) of what was sealed” (HELPS Word Studies).

This seal then is as sure as a signature of ownership by God. No higher seal than this can be found in heaven or on earth. And no power can reclaim from God what God has sealed. Further, it is something that is given and will never be taken back. If it were to be taken back, then it means that God has made a mistake in His sealing; something impossible. The logical progression of what Paul says is –

- 1) A person hears the word of truth (the gospel of his salvation).
- 2) He believes the message.
- 3) He is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.
- 4) He is now entitled to all of the benefits that the Jews, as an inheritance, also received by that same process of faith – there being one gospel alone for both Jew and Gentile.

Next, the word for “guarantee” is *arrabón*. It is a rare word, found only three times in the New Testament. It means “properly, an installment; a *deposit* (‘down-payment’) which *guarantees* the balance (the *full* purchase-price) ... [It] is the regular term in NT times for ‘*earnest-money*,’ i.e. *advance-payment* that guarantees *the rest* will be given...[it] then represents *full security* backed by the purchaser who supplies sufficient proof they will *fulfill* the entire pledge (promise)” (HELPS Word Studies).

Understanding the meaning of this word, it is impossible that there could later be a loss of salvation for a person who has – at any time in his life – believed in Him and been saved. If God seals us with His Holy Spirit as a guarantee, and if we can lose that, then –

- 1) The gift was not a gift at all. As it can be taken back, the term “gift” is then a lie.
- 2) It was not a very good guarantee. In fact, it was no guarantee at all. God’s decree has failed.
- 3) It is, by default, of our effort and not of God that we are saved. (If we can lose our salvation at any time after having it granted, then it was never of grace in the first place. By default, it must be of works.)
- 4) God made a mistake in sealing us with His “guarantee.” As God cannot make a mistake, because He knows the end from the beginning, a person who believes salvation can be lost is now following a false god.

- 5) It would diminish the value of Christ's atoning shed blood which was used for the purchase of the possession. His cross is, by default, unable to procure and secure that for which it was intended.

As noted, the word *arrabón* is found only three times in the New Testament. The other two times are in 2 Corinthians 1:22 and in 2 Corinthians 5:5. In all three uses, it is referring to the pledge of the Holy Spirit. He is our surety and our guarantee. As this is the sealing of God in us, it represents the highest of all authorities.

It further represents an eternal decree of God. It can never be undone without violating the initial decree. As we learned in a previous doctrine sermon, God's decrees are unconditional, and they are eternal. Therefore, the believer is one hundred percent secure as he awaits "the redemption of the purchased possession."

What is being referred to here is, as Charles Ellicott says, "the complete and final salvation from sin and death." This indicates the result of the action, and not the action itself. In other words, we have already been purchased by and through the work of Christ. This is evidenced by the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

God cannot lie. The salvation of the one who has believed the gospel is secure. And all of this is, as Paul says, "to the praise of His glory." Vincent's Word Studies notes that this final clause is to be taken together with the words "you were sealed." Our sealing is to the praise of God's glory because it conforms to "God's purpose as it respects Himself."

Those who teach one can lose his salvation state the following –

- 1) What Christ did is ineffectual for the purpose it was intended.
- 2) God's gift of salvation, meaning Christ Jesus, must be earned; it is not a gift.
- 3) Salvation is not of grace, but of works.
- 4) God's sealing of the Holy Spirit has no value beyond human ability.
- 5) God's guarantee is conditional upon human action, which is fallible, forgetful, and futile.

Further, to teach that one can lose his salvation demonstrates a complete misunderstanding, or a total rejection, of what Christ did in regard to the law and its effects for the people of the world. The Law of Moses was given to Israel, and only to Israel, but it is the standard which God has set for judgment.

This is true, because Jesus Christ came under the Law of Moses. Therefore, in man's

judgment – whether Jew or Gentile – the comparison is to Christ, who came under the law. It is His perfection *which is the standard* by which all will be judged.

Paul shows us in Romans 6:14, 15 that for those in Christ, they are not under law but under grace. He further explains in Romans 10:4 that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” In other words, for the one who has placed his faith in Christ, He is their righteousness. In Him, the requirements of the law have been met, and the law is dead to them.

Paul says in Romans 3:20 that by law is the knowledge of sin. In Romans 6:23, he then says that the wages of sin is death. Death is the payment for sin, which comes through law. But Paul then says that, “the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God’s gift is given, the demands of the law are satisfied in Him, and therefore, the believer is *not under law*. Without law, there can be no imputation of sin. And this is what Paul says is the case for those in Christ. He says that God is “reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

This then is the fundamental misunderstanding of those who believe one can lose his salvation. Sin is the problem which leads to death and separation from God. Sin comes through law. Those *not* under law are *not* imputed sin. Therefore, they cannot lose their salvation.

If God did count sin against the man in Christ, then it would mean that God has *not* accepted Christ’s fulfillment of the law for that man, or any man – ever – in human history. The entire point of Christ’s coming is wasted if even one person who has been saved by Christ is lost. And if one person is lost, then none will be saved. The efficacy of what Christ has done is obliterated by those who teach salvation can be lost.

As stated already, God’s decrees are unconditional. Those who believe that the decree of salvation is conditional have no understanding of the nature of God, or of the eternal nature of His spoken word.

To understand salvation on a basic level, all one needs to do is to look to Israel. God made a promise to Israel that He would never reject them, even when they rejected Him. His word is His guarantee, and His honor is what is at stake. It is “to the praise of His glory.”

This was not for their sake, but for His name's sake. The salvation or rejection of Israel by God is the template for the salvation or rejection of each individual in Christ. As He said to Israel –

“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.’” Ezekiel 36:22 (and substantially repeated in Ezekiel 36:32)

Though individuals were cut off, it was *not to individuals* that the covenant was made, it was made with the people of Israel collectively. In the New Covenant, God promises salvation through His covenant of grace not only to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah collectively, but it applies to individuals.

If God were to reject Israel, He could not be trusted. His word is given, and it must come to pass. The same is true with each person in Christ, of which Israel is the template. His word is given, and that person's salvation must come to pass – or God cannot be trusted.

Despite Israel's failings, they remain collectively saved. And thus, despite our failings, we remain individually saved. We can ask, “What sin would separate us from God's salvation in Christ?” The answer comes back in several ways. First in 1 Corinthians 5, a man is noted as committing an offense “not even named among the Gentiles.”

So perverse were his actions that Paul instructed the congregation to expel him from the fellowship. They were to, “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (verse 5).

He may die in the process of his sinful life, but he remains saved. Secondly, can walking away from the faith result in a loss of salvation? The answer is, again, “No.” From 1 Timothy 1 –

“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, ²⁰ of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” 1 Timothy 1:18-20

These two rejects, Hymenaeus and Alexander, had shipwrecked their faith, they had left the proper path, and Paul gave them the exact same treatment that he instructed the

Corinthians to give to their offender – handing them over to Satan. The implication is that they remain saved but will suffer affliction in this life and loss in the next.

There is no incident in Scripture where a person is said to lose his salvation, and there is no verse in Scripture which supports a loss of salvation, as we will see next...

Who can find the end of God's grace?

Who can say, "It goes this far, but no further does it go!"?

Can you, this attribute of God erase?

The answer comes back from the heavens with a resounding "No!"

What God has done is because of who He is

When He grants salvation, it is a gift – handed out to you

He will never take back a gift; He is not in that biz

Rather, His word stands firm because He is ever Faithful and True

Praise be to God who does not forget His word

But sends it forth as a testimony of His mercy and grace

And to the ends of the earth, His message will be heard

To those who come to Jesus, upon them will forever shine His face

II. Proper Context and Right Division

In biblical interpretation, context is king. It is the primary point of consideration – before any other is necessary – to determine the applicability of a passage or verse. For the doctrine of salvation, including whether it can be lost or not, the context is that of post-resurrection.

Generally, verses or precepts, prior to Christ's work in the fulfillment of the law which includes Christ's death as a part of that fulfillment, are not acceptable to be considered in the context of salvation. The law was not fulfilled, Christ had not died for our offenses, and He had not been raised for our justification.

Therefore, if someone cites a verse from the synoptic gospels as proof that one can lose his salvation, that can be tossed out immediately. The words are spoken to Israel, under the law. The context is wrong, and therefore the analysis is also wrong. There is no need to go further.

The book of Acts is a descriptive account of the establishment of the church. It prescribes almost nothing. With very few exceptions, if someone uses the book of Acts in a prescriptive manner, that analysis is to be tossed out. The context is wrong, and therefore the analysis is also wrong.

The epistles are where church age doctrine comes from. If one is to also include Revelation 1-3 in this analysis, which is not unacceptable, the context still needs to be maintained. Who is being addressed? Under what circumstances are the words being written? Are the words speaking about individuals or a group of people? Does the verse stand alone, or is it a part of a greater whole? What brought about the issue? And so on. All of this must be considered. An example of this is the often-misused verse of Revelation 2:5 –

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” Revelation 2:5

This verse has nothing to do with individual salvation. Jesus is speaking to a church, not to individuals. This is even explicitly explained in Chapter 1 where he says that the lampstand represents the church. To have a lampstand removed, then, is to no longer be recognized as an acceptable church. That verse can be tossed out.

This idea of a corporate addressee resolves several of the most often misunderstood verses concerning loss of salvation in Scripture – Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26-29. Who is being spoken to? The answer is, “The Hebrews.” Hebrews 6:4-6 says –

“For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.” Hebrews 6:4-6

This set of verses has nothing to do with individual salvation. It has to do with the corporate group known as Israel. Everything the author says is in the plural. But to settle this, we will spend the next several minutes, or more, going through these verses individually, maintaining that context, and see what they are saying –

6:4 – “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,”

The letter is written to Hebrew Christians. The temple was standing at the time of the letter to the Hebrews as can be determined from other verses within the letter. The content of Hebrews is pertinent to today's church as well, but the specific addressees are the Hebrew people. With this understanding, the words of this verse are not directed to the Gentile-led church age, nor to individual salvation.

"For it is impossible." The words themselves call to mind the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:26, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." However, some things are, in fact, impossible with God. He cannot violate one of His own attributes. He is righteous and He cannot, therefore, commit unrighteousness.

Such is the case with all of His attributes. What Jesus was referring to were things which are not logically or morally impossible for God. Such is the case with spiritual matters like salvation. Man cannot save himself through his own merits, but man can be saved through the merits of Christ.

"...for those." The words are not in the singular, but are rather in the plural, "those." This will continue throughout all three verses. It is speaking about a collective whole.

"...who were once enlightened." This is a metaphor which is used in Hebrews 10:32 where it is again in the plural. There it applies in a general manner to all who are addressed. Here it is speaking of a certain group who have been enlightened. From this, the words will explain what that enlightenment means.

"...and having tasted." To "taste" something in Scripture is to experience or understand that thing. In Hebrews 2:9, Jesus "tasted" death for everyone. He experienced death, but it was also something that was, at least in the case of believers, something that could be tasted vicariously. Some will never taste death because He died on our behalf (see 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

"...the heavenly gift." There is a parallelism with the words here, and the words of chapter 2. In verse 3, it speaks of salvation (tasted); and in verse 4, it speaks of gifts of the Holy Spirit (the heavenly gift). The heavenly gifts, those of the Holy Spirit, are the proof of salvation. These were imparted to the Jews of Acts 2.

In Acts 2:38, Peter, while speaking to the Jews of Israel (not the Gentile-led church), promised that they would likewise receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by repenting and being baptized in the name of Jesus.

This is something that occurred differently (in order and in requirement) in Acts 8 with the Samaritans, and again in Acts 10 with the Gentiles in Caesarea. The author of Hebrews is writing to this same group of people, the Hebrews, to instruct them in how to properly understand what reception of this gift then means to them as a collective group.

“...and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit.” They (the collective whole, but not necessarily every one of them) tasted of the gifts of the Spirit because they had partaken of the Holy Spirit. Those who so tasted can only mean true believers. When we partake of something, we participate in that thing. The Holy Spirit is the Gift, and the Gift itself is what bears the heavenly quality.

This is the state of things so far in the first of these three rather complicated verses. “Those who have tasted the heavenly gift” are those who *have understood* the message which they heard – whether they collectively accepted it or not.

They have, in their mind, all the knowledge sufficient to be saved through the work of Jesus Christ. Theirs is no longer a problem with comprehending the message, but the collective heart hasn’t been touched – something which must occur.

Those “who have shared in the Holy Spirit” are those who *have seen* the effective power of God displayed in the lives of the converted among them. They may have personally witnessed the miracles and power of Jesus and/or the apostles, or they may have seen the power of the Holy Spirit demonstrated in the conversion of another – they “have shared in” this experience. This *does not necessarily mean* that all of those in this collective have received the Holy Spirit personally.

6:5 – “...and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,”

“...and have tasted the good word of God.” Again, to taste is to experience. The good word of God is the gospel message of Jesus, the Messiah of the Hebrews (who are the recipients of this epistle), and all of the sound doctrine which pertains to this word. It is an acceptance of the truth of Jesus the Messiah as Scripture testifies to.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The language here speaks of the Hebrew people collectively having tasted this good word of God. First, while the temple was still standing, the Jews had this taste and yet, as a people, they adamantly remained under the sacrificial system of temple worship.

In the first century, these people had both the Old Testament and any word which was then in circulation – either orally or written – which confirmed Jesus’ ministry and spoke of how the Old was fulfilled in the New.

By *hearing and understanding* this word, they could taste and understand its goodness. Adding in the demonstrable proofs of the apostles which testified to the fulfillment of their Scriptures in Jesus, they had surely tasted the good word of God.

“...and the powers of the age to come.” The wording here is different than in Hebrews 2:5, though some translations make them the same in the English by saying “the world to come.” Hebrews 2:5 speaks of the inhabited world; here it is speaking of a cycle of time, and thus an age.

In the end, they both look forward to the same thing: a taste of which was given to the Hebrews at Pentecost, and which will also be the case after the rapture of the church, and during and after the tribulation period. There will be notable gifts of the Spirit then as there was at the beginning.

Charles Ellicott states, they “were as truly anticipations of a future age of glory as was the ‘heavenly gift’ an anticipation of the ‘heavenly fatherland.’” These Hebrews had experienced these “powers of the age to come.” These powers most especially indicate the promised time when Jesus will return to rule the nations and “He will rule them with an iron scepter...” (Revelation 2:27).

The Jewish people had seen or heard of this power demonstrated *in the resurrection* – the very proof that Jesus is God. These points would have been made known to those who received this letter – that Jesus both fulfilled the role of Messiah and would return again in that capacity at some point in the future.

To have an understanding of these wonderful tenets and then to reject them for an inferior system (meaning temple sacrifices) would not only make no sense, but it would also show a complete lack of faith in God’s provision which was provided in the Person and work of Jesus.

6:6 – “...if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.”

The author now begins with, “if they fall away.” There is actually no “if” in the Greek. This insert is based on a presupposition that the entire thought is hypothetical, but one

which could not be expected to occur in reality. The words say, “and (then, or having) fallen away.” The verb is in the aorist tense. However, though “if” is not included in the thought, it is still, in a sense, a hypothetical postulation.

From verse 6:4 until this point, the author has not said that such a thing has occurred, but he is proposing that it could and then stating what the results would be. In this case, and understanding that, at a specific time, there was a falling away in this proposal being submitted.

Despite having tasted and participated in what was offered through the Holy Spirit they fell away. It is a warning that in the rejection of the Lord, after they had tasted the heavenly gift, and after they had tasted the good word of God, they would be considered as having fallen away.

It is the same collective type of thought which was mentioned earlier in Hebrews where the people failed to believe, and they collectively did not enter into God’s rest. That was referring to the time of the people’s rejection of the Lord in the book of Numbers.

If it were to occur that this group of people fell away, it would be impossible “to renew them again to repentance.” The “repentance” speaks of turning the mind of the people once again to what they had already turned their minds to.

Many in the collective had believed, but eventually, the people as a whole turned from this belief in (or about) Christ. They had been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, etc. To be renewed, in fact, implies that they had once been endowed with this tasting of Christ; some were followers of the Messiah.

The verb here for “renew” is now in the active voice. What this is telling us is that it is impossible for men. However, as seen from Jesus’ words of Matthew 19:26, what is impossible with men is not impossible for God. There can be no contradiction in Scripture, and so this must be considered.

Nothing that a man does to renew this group will be possible. But the truth is that nothing any person does can bring a person to salvation in the first place. Apart from God’s specific revelation of Himself, salvation is not possible. God has brought man to salvation through Christ. A man cannot save himself. The same is true with this verse here concerning Israel.

Scripture never shuts the door on forgiveness to anyone who repents concerning Christ, nor does it shut the door on Israel as a collective (see Romans 9-11). Therefore, when such a falling away occurs, as long as the condition lasts, a renewal is impossible.

The words in no way mean that such a renewal is impossible, but that it cannot occur while the person (or the group) is living under an old economy which has found its fulfillment in Christ (through the New Covenant).

As Cambridge notes, "There can, he implies, be no second 'Second Birth.' The sternness of the passage is in exact accordance with Hebrews 10:26-29 (comp. 2 Peter 2:20-21); but 'the impossibility lies merely within the limits of the hypothesis itself.'"

"...since they crucify again." The Greek, as is translated by the Berean Study Bible, more closely reads, "and then having fallen away-- to restore them again to repentance, crucifying in themselves the Son of God and subjecting Him to open shame."

It does not say, "again," twice. Rather, it is only used once in relation to "repentance." As far as the word, "crucify," the verb is a present participle; and thus, the Berean Study Bible is correct in saying "crucifying."

It has the intent of "crucifying as they are doing." It does not imply an absolute apostasy, but one which is continuous. The tense of the verbs went from past to present. Such is the case with Israel today. They are "crucifying" the Lord through their rejection of Him.

The temple was standing; a future temple will stand. To observe temple rites, to then come to Jesus who is the fulfillment of all of those types and shadows; and then to return to the same temple rites which only prefigured Him, would be to reject what God has done in Christ. He died for the sins of the world. Therefore, the cross of Christ is no longer available to them because it no longer has the meaning they once assigned to it.

The author then continues with, "...for themselves." This is a reflexive pronoun, dative, third person, plural. It should read, "in themselves," or, "to themselves." As Cambridge notes, "This is what is called 'the dative of disadvantage' – 'to their own destruction.'"

There is no human remedy for sin forgiveness, and the temple rites which looked forward to Christ are now, in fact, a human remedy to Israel. Only God can forgive, and that through Christ, who is "... the Son of God." To take this course of action would then lead to the final words of the verses, "...and put Him to open shame."

What is the purpose of Christ's cross if Israel retreats to what only looked forward to that cross – meaning observing the Law of Moses? It is a shameful act which would, in turn, bring discredit upon the Lord who voluntarily took on the very sin which the temple rites could not expiate. This is what Israel did. After tasting His goodness, they shunned Him and returned fully to temple worship. To this day, they are looking to re-establish that temple worship once again.

What is seen here is merely A theoretical possibility concerning the salvation of God's people, Israel, collectively. It is not speaking of what God has done in saving and sealing individuals under the New Covenant. This is the same for Hebrews 10:26-29 which we will not bother analyzing due to time constraints.

For Israel, there is no finality revealed in these three verses. Everything in Scripture testifies to the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ which is by grace through faith. The author's warning is that for Israel to assume that going back to the temple rites will make them holy (or more holy), or bring them nearer to God, is completely contradictory to the work of Christ itself.

Further, the words of the author later in verse 9 actually presuppose that this is, in fact, a hypothetical situation which is being spoken of, and thus it is a doctrinal treatise for the church to read and learn from, and for the nation of Israel, as a whole, to do the same. Until they, as a collective whole, come to Christ, they can find no way of being restored to God. Those things of the Old merely looked forward to the New.

As I noted, the other set of verses which are often used to justify that one can lose his salvation are Hebrews 10:26-29. Like the previous verses, a proper evaluation of them will likewise reveal that these words have nothing to do with the loss of individual salvation. This is true with other difficult verses like John 15:6.

Time does not allow for a full evaluation of these verses, or for any others which are brought into this false teaching by the theologically confused. For anyone who feels differently, my commentaries are available to them for their doctrinal correction.

This is true for any other verse or verses that are incorrectly and haphazardly pulled out of their intended context. If you feel you have the verse which you believe clinches your claim concerning this matter, I have two points for you –

- 1) You are wrong, and
- 2) Email me for the correction of your faulty analysis.

Stand approved, obtain right doctrine, and don't continue to spout off the false doctrine which says that one can lose what God has given, sealed, and guaranteed. Your stubborn attitude in this diminishes the work of Christ, and thus the glory that God is due through the giving of His Son.

In the end, simple logic concerning the nature of God refutes the idea of a loss of salvation. The written word, combined with understanding His nature, confirms this. And finally, taking all verses in their intended context dispels any misunderstanding or misapplication of what is being conveyed.

*Saved once and for ever through Christ's shed blood
Safe within Him for now and for all eternity
Come and be rescued through the cleansing flood
His grace is a gift of love, poured out abundantly*

*We praise You, O God, for what you have done
We thank You for the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord
How glorious, O God, is the Gift of Your Son
For through Him, on us, Your salvation You have poured*

*Now and forever, we give You thanks and praise
Yes, we shall hail Your goodness and glory, even for eternal days*

III. Rewards and Losses

Paul says in Romans 8:30, "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

God's decrees are unconditional. What He has stated is done. Though we are still in this mortal body, in God's mind, we were predestined, we were called, we are justified, and we are glorified. That is His decree, and it is immutable. Thank God that this process is once and forever behind us.

However, because we are still in this body, there are consequences for not living as we should while still here. Those consequences will not affect our salvation, but they can affect us in several profound ways –

- 1) In our earthly walk in physical or mental ways.
- 2) In the confidence of our walk with the Lord. And,

3) In our future rewards when we stand before the Lord.

The first was alluded to by Paul concerning the sexually immoral man at Corinth. He instructed the church to hand him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. What that meant is, “To the consequences of his sin.” He may suffer or die from a sexually transmitted disease, he may get shot by a jealous lover, and so on.

Any sin is destructive. A drunk may die from alcohol-related problems, a person taking drugs may contract a communicable disease, die of the effects of the drugs, and so on. This is what Paul meant.

The second way our life can be negatively affected is through an uncertain walk with the Lord. When we are not living for the Lord, it hinders our prayer life. Peter says this explicitly when husbands fail to honor their wives as they should.

If prayers are hindered for that, then it is logical to assume that they will be hindered for other failings as well. Further, when one fails to live for the Lord, his personal testimony is harmed in the eyes of others. How can one be confident in the Lord, especially before others, when he isn’t living as he should?

And thirdly, all that we do from the time we come to Christ is being evaluated for the day when we receive our judgment before Him. Paul speaks of this day and what it means for the believer, explicitly, in both 1 Corinthians 3 and in 2 Corinthians 5. In his words are further confirmations of the doctrine of eternal salvation –

For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, *you are* God’s building.

¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” 1 Corinthians 3:9-15

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether

good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.”

-2 Corinthians 5:9-11

We are not saved in order to then continue working to keep our salvation – something which both denies the grace of God and which excludes faith in His provision. Rather, we are saved in order to live faithful lives and lives of faith. Those things we do, in faith, for the Lord will receive rewards. Those things we do that are not in faith will receive none.

And I would suggest to you that for those who started in faith, believing the gospel, and who then later turned to the false teaching which says salvation can be lost, will receive no rewards for their conduct. Having started in grace, they have returned to works, setting aside that grace.

And having started in faith, they no longer trust that the grace is sufficient. Therefore, and by default, they are no longer walking in faith. Thus, rewards are excluded. Such a person is ever striving to somehow earn the grace he has set aside.

In such a walk, there is no room for failure, and there is no true joy in one's salvation. The doom of banishment is one slipup away. And worse, there is nothing in Scripture to say what that one failure might be. Therefore, any failure at all is one of possible, but uncertain condemnation. What a sad, vapid existence in Christ.

At the beginning of this sermon, I mentioned the scenario where a child was led to Christ and then he was no longer disciplined. And also, of the village that was led to Christ and then their mentoring ended. For the villagers, an aberrant cult came in and reeducated them with a lie.

What are the consequences of such things? Those people will remain saved because salvation is eternal. God has spoken and sealed and the deal is done. However, sadly, the next generation of those villagers will never come to the same saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is why it is incumbent on us to not only lead people to Christ, but to lead them to sound doctrine in Christ.

Some years ago, I was friended on Facebook by a person who watched the prophecy updates. He was all excited about them and sent a gift to me, a painting. However, many months later when he – in his confused theology – found out that I teach the doctrine of eternal salvation, he emailed me and demanded the gift back.

That is a marvelous object lesson for each of you. Think about it. Think about the nature of what was supposed to be a “gift.” And think about the depravity of the giver who would do such a thing. Now think about the nature of God, the goodness of God in sending His Son, and what God has said in His word concerning this issue.

Are you going to ascribe such a perverse nature to the Giver of all good things? Israel’s failings actually bring glory to God because He has stood by them despite their conduct. And your failings, tragic as though they may be, will not be imputed to you as sin who are in Christ. Such is the nature of God’s grace.

If you are one of the uninformed or willfully uneducated people who actually believes that you have to help God along in order to stay saved, you are to be pitied. Your walk has become a walk of works, and if of works, it is not of Christ.

Such is not the case for those who have trusted and continue to trust in God’s provision of unmerited favor in Christ. There are no loopholes in God’s promise that a person is justified, sanctified, and glorified. It is a done deal. So, rest in that blessed assurance. And then, go forth in faith and receive your rewards for the conduct of your life on that great Day when you stand before the Lord who saved you, once and forever.

Closing Verse: *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”*

-Revelation 22:21

THE WORD OF GOD – A PETITION FOR REASON

Psalm 19:7-11

*“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
⁸ The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
⁹ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward.”*

During this sermon, I am going to reference myself about 8 million times, taking you through some of my personal experiences since coming to Christ. This is not to blow my own horn, but it is to provide you with a basis for understanding why I am constantly telling you to read your Bible.

The one way that I can, hopefully, drum this into you, is to tell you about my own experiences. In seeing them, I hope you will see why you also need to follow suit.

The night before typing this sermon, I was getting over a cold and quit work early, just after I got all the necessary Sunday stuff done. “The rest can wait while I get some rest.” As Hideko wasn’t home, and as I was too hungry to go to bed without eating, I turned on a war movie that I was still finishing from days before.

The guys were in combat and right in the middle of the fighting, they took a break to read their letters from home. Those letters were handwritten, took some time to arrive in Vietnam, and then more time to get out to the men in the field.

The next day, when I typed this sermon, I went as usual to the mall and 7-11 to do my morning jobs there before coming home and finishing this sermon. As I came home, an Amazon truck pulled in front of me, rushing down the road with some hugely important package that had to be there... right now.

We have gone from patiently waiting for things to come about, to wanting everything – right now. And more, we want bigger, better, flashier, and something that will delight our senses and tickle our ears. The love letters from home no longer fill our minds with delight.

We can talk to someone on the other side of the world, face to face, for free, and any time we wish. We hurry through our conversations and cut off the other person over a knock on the door, or the start of a football game.

We started this series with a sermon entitled, “The Word of God – The Basis of Our Faith.” Since then, we’ve mildly touched on only a few relevant points of doctrine. This was never intended to be a series on anything more than the most important of tenets which will at least give us a sound basis for not getting pulled into some teaching which is completely crazy. But that can still happen. I assure you of this.

To teach forever on doctrines which may be important to anyone of us would mean that we would never again actually get into the Bible itself. And if that was the case, each and every one of us would be all the less sound in our relationship with the Lord. Doctrine is not a means to an end. It is simply a part of what the Lord expects of us in our walk with Him.

And so, if you want to continue learning sound doctrine, there is a cure for your hunger. That is to attend our Thursday evening Bible studies. Yes, I know... Oh no! Each week, you will get exactly that – directly from the Bible, but also as a compilation of doctrinal concepts which fit in with the verses that are being analyzed.

However, what I teach you there is still based on who I am as a person, what I have learned through reading, studying, being trained by others, and so on. Or, maybe I simply plagiarized someone else – meaning I just took what sounded good and went with it because that was the easiest route to my path of wealth and stardom.

When I met the Lord – I mean when I really realized who I was in relation to Him and my need to devote my life to Him – I had a lot of other responsibilities in my life. Of course, I had Hideko as a wife, and you must know how time-consuming that is... well, at least for her.

Tangerine and Thorr lived in the house and children are known to take up *some* of our time. I had a business just down the road – Asian Trade. I also had several part-time

jobs. In total, I worked seven days a week, from before sunrise until up to, or after, sunset.

But I also had something that most people don't have. I had ten hours a day of free time. How is that possible? It is because I had Asian Trade. A retail business, especially one that deals with things that people don't need, but who are just looking to fill their lives with something interesting, is a business that may have one customer a day, or maybe ten, each there for just a few minutes.

The rest of the time is spent all alone and it needs to be filled with something. With ten hours a day, and with nothing else to do, when the Jehovah's Witnesses came and asked if I wanted to talk, I was like, "Thank God – relief from the boredom!"

And so, we talked. At one point, I asked a question, and one of the two said, "Oh that's right here." He opened up the Bible, showed me a verse that was pertinent to a particular part of my life that was not right with the Lord, and I froze. One verse had changed my life.

From that day on, I started to read the Bible – ten hours a day. Actually more, because when I got home, I started to read it again on the couch. If you have an audio Bible, you know that it takes about 70 hours to get through it. That is read aloud, and it is read slowly. One can read the Bible in much less time than an audio Bible.

Each week, I would read the Bible through. As soon as I got to the word "Amen" at Revelation 22:21, I would turn back to Genesis 1:1 and start again. For the first couple of months of this, I also started going to the JWs Kingdom Hall on Sunday morning. I had never seen anyone actually open the Bible to teach, and so I thought they must really know what they were talking about.

After just a short time, it was perfectly evident that what they were teaching had nothing to do with what the Bible says. If it was two months going there, I had already read the Bible at least eight times. If it was three, make it twelve or more. And so, through the Lord's tender mercies of giving me a slow retail business to run, we parted company.

Text Verse: *"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of*

the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

-Ephesians 4:11-16

Paul warned us about being tossed to and fro and being carried about by every wind of doctrine. And as he says, that is “by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” My question to you is, “How do you know?” It is the main subject of our final sermon of this series.

After my short stint with the JW's, I continued to read the Bible each week or so. But I started changing things up. I would count time intervals – how many years it was from this to this. Or how many days old a person was when something happened in his life, and so on. One time through, I counted how many times the word “Jerusalem” was mentioned in the Bible and made a note of all of the different names that God used when speaking of Jerusalem – there are a lot.

I also changed the order of reading. I would read one OT book and then one NT book. By the time I had read the Old once, I was also finishing the New for a second time.

Then I started reading books 1, 23, and 45; 2; 24, and 46, and etc. Thus, you would end at 22, 44, and 66. The patterns that run through that type of reading are literally astonishing, but that is for another day. Every time that I read through the Bible, I would think of something interesting to do or to search out so that there was some type of a challenge for me.

Eventually, I took a self-learn course in both Hebrew and Greek, and then bought an interlinear Hebrew and Greek Bible and read both testaments, out loud, in Hebrew and Greek. I had no idea what it said, but it was a start.

As I went through them, I also looked for translational and numerical errors in their text. By the time I was done – after going through only one time and without knowing Hebrew or Greek at even a basic level, I had almost nine single-spaced pages of errors which I submitted to the publishers for correction.

An example of a very basic error is that they translated the divine name Yehovah as “Jacob.” I would say that is a bit problematic for someone who thinks they are reading an accurate translation. If you want to see the errors – the four-part Bible is on the shelf in the back here at the church. Just flip through and look for highlighted or annotated errors.

Why is this important? Because people are reading that document, as pitifully translated as it is, and they think they are getting the straight scoop. They have put their trust in something which even a dolt like me, on my first read through it, could find innumerable errors.

And that was recommended to me by the well-known TV Show “Prophecy in the News.” It came with his highest stamp of approval, and it turned out to be a marginal translation at best. After that, I realized that if he is endorsing something so bad, I could find something other to do with my time than watch his TV show.

Ok, that is a portion of my original time in the word. I continued this pace for two full years until I finally closed Asian Trade and went back into the wastewater business. This wasn’t bad, because on the night shift, other than one’s regular duties, you either watched TV, read a book, or went outside out and threw paper airplanes. Again, I spent any free time reading the Bible.

So, I’ll let you do the math. I never counted the number of times that I have read it, and that isn’t what was important. What was, is that despite having read the Bible many, many times, I still had absolutely no theology at all.

One can read a manual on chemicals and understand what is being said, and yet not know how to properly work with those chemicals because there are other things that are involved doing so. One form of knowledge does not necessarily equate to ability in all areas of that discipline.

I knew all about Jesus, why He came, and what the Bible was telling me, but I had no way of expressing it. I had never told anyone about Him in a specific way and probably could not have done so. But one day, a pastor asked Hideko if he could tell her about Jesus. He did, and in three minutes, he had explained something that I could not have properly done after three years of reading the Bible.

Once I realized this, my next step was to make a sign, “Bible Questions Answered – Don’t Be Shy,” and I would go to the beach, plunk it in the sand, and wait for people to

come. And they came constantly. If you want to learn how to teach, or if you want to learn how to unpackage the knowledge you possess and turn it into theology, then what you need to do is to simply get a sign and let people start asking you questions.

You might make yourself look like a fool for the first week, but very quickly, if you care at all about sticking it out, you will expand in your ability to unpackage that information you possess, and you will be able to convey it to others in a reasonable, intelligent manner.

But there is the same problem with going to that guy on the beach that there is with going to church on Sunday morning. Without knowing the Bible yourself, you are listening to someone who may or may not have any idea of what he is talking about. That is a real problem. Because the Bible is our means of understanding the Lord and what He expects. And so, let us discuss that beautiful word once again, and may God open our hearts to His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Proper Interpretation

The subject of proper biblical interpretation has been written about and expanded on for millennia. Entire books are dedicated to single sections of individual disciplines, and in-depth courses in Bible colleges and seminaries are focused on these things as well.

Simply defined, the subject of hermeneutics is that of dealing with interpretation of a given literary text. In the case of the Bible, we would say, “biblical hermeneutics.”

Within biblical hermeneutics, there is a vast array of terminology which is used to define various interpretive methods. In order to properly apply biblical hermeneutics, however, we need to first define what is proper concerning the application of those things.

In other words, we might know that the book of Acts is a historical account of what occurred at the beginning of the church. But we may not understand how to properly apply that knowledge in our interpretative method.

And so, even before knowing the type of literature that is presented – be it historical, prophetic, poetic, or whatever, we must know how to draw out from what we are reading what is actually appropriate.

This is the area of study known as exegesis. The prefix *ek*, means “out,” and thus one is to draw out of the text what is being said. The opposite of this, then, is eisegesis. Instead

of drawing out what is intended, someone may read a passage and insert his own completely subjective interpretation into the text. Without any support for the conclusion at all, he will make a statement that what he presents is valid, logical, and appropriate.

This is what democrat scholars do with the constitution of the United States of America. They call it a “living document,” meaning that it changes and grows within itself, and it is thus subject to their own personal interpretations. From that faulty premise, they then eisegete all kinds of ideas which destroy the original intent of those who presented us with this founding document.

The Bible was given to man by God. He did it through men of God at various points within history, in various languages, and in various locations. But even with these variations, there is the one overarching truth that what is presented is ultimately from God. Therefore, the word will be consistent, unchanging in its overall intent, and will steadily and unwaveringly direct the reader concerning its overall truths.

Therefore, and with that in mind, we are to exegete, or draw out, what is being said. But there is then something which is actually even more important to be considered. It is the first, greatest, and most destructive failing of almost all students of the Bible. That failing is to simply know the contents of the Bible – in their entirety.

One of my favorite personal expressions – one that I say all the time and so many of you have heard it many times – is that “Everyone is a specialist in the Bible, but almost no one knows the Bible.” They may dogmatically argue for a particular precept from the Bible, for example a mid-tribulation rapture, and yet they may not have ever read the entire New Testament, or even the books in which the rapture verses are given.

Never mind that the rapture is actually even alluded to in Old Testament typology – a part of the Bible which they probably have never even opened. For anyone to teach any part of the Bible, it is almost unthinkable to me, and unconscionable at best, that he would not have first read through the Bible – from cover to cover many, many times.

And yet, there are pastors and ministers that I know personally who have admitted to me that they have never read the Old Testament, or that they have gone through the Bible once. One was an ordained minister of 34 years, and he had read it once. What this means is that everything such people are teaching is based on an uncertain footing, and it has been derived solely from someone else’s possibly already faulty hermeneutic.

But the problem is that if they have not read their Bible – which is a vast and complicated book – many, many times, then they cannot truthfully say that what they have been taught actually matches with what God – who is consistently revealing Himself through this word – is actually saying.

An example of this is the heresy known as *hyperdispensationalism*. This teaching incorrectly divides the overall gospel message of Jesus Christ into two gospels – one for the Jew and one for the Gentile. This occurs based on a faulty hermeneutic, and an eisegesis of many verses and concepts, particularly those which refer to the Old Testament, and especially the Mosaic Covenant.

And so, I ask you now, before we continue on, have you read the entire Bible – cover to cover? If not, you are unqualified to teach on any subject of the Bible. Because the Bible is inspired by God, and because its message is a unified whole, how can you know that what you are teaching is not somehow aberrant when taken in the entire context of Scripture, of which you have not even read?

Secondly, how many times have you read through the Bible? Some have better memories than others, but remembering something is not the same as properly aligning that memory with all of the other points contained within the whole.

Only in repeatedly returning to the Bible, reading it while considering everything else that is contained within it – something which can only occur through repeated readings – and then properly aligning those considerations into a rounded systematic theology, can you properly explain why you have chosen one interpretation of a verse or concept rather than another.

There is a savant who has memorized every book he has ever read. He read the KJV of the Bible once, and you can ask him, “What is the name of the person on page 247” of the copy he read, and he will tell you that – or anything else that is in that book. And yet, despite knowing every word of that Bible, he has no theology at all.

Thirdly, how long has it been since you last read the Bible? How many here today remember what they had for lunch yesterday? How about lunch last Tuesday? That food was something you probably personally selected based on its size and content, numminess, cost, and etc. Or, maybe it was prepared by the loving hands of someone important to you. And yet, you don’t remember what it was.

The Bible says that God's word is sweet to our taste, more so than honey (that is the numminess). It says that it nourishes us (that would be the size and content). It says that it is better to us than thousands of coins of gold and silver (that is its cost). And along with those things, it was prepared, in love, by the hands of the Creator of the universe. And yet, like our lunch from last Tuesday, our memory will fade concerning its contents if we do not open it daily and eat of its delight. This not an "if." It *will* happen.

Fourthly, have you limited yourself to one translation of the Bible? If so, you have limited yourself to man's fallible and short-sighted ability to translate what God has given us. As I type commentaries and sermons from the word, I make a special point of documenting each valid translational error in the King James Version.

So far, and having completed only a small portion of the books of the Bible, I am up to thousands of actual, verifiable, and often damaging errors in it. If you want a copy of that resource, email me and I'll send it to you.

But people have been so conditioned by a false teaching that – as Paul calls it – “the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” – that they simply accept that the King James Version is the only acceptable Bible version on planet earth.

But, like not reading the Bible and yet being a specialist in all things theology, many have never checked these translational things out. Despite this, they are adamant that what they have been told about the infallibility of the King James Version is not to be questioned. How can they know if they haven't even checked it out?

I will give several reasons for both sides of this issue before we finish today. For now, I will give you arguments against the lie. One is that there is great money to be made by those who perpetuate this lie. The KJV is in the Public Domain. Anyone can make a printing of it without any costs apart from the printing itself.

Making a Bible translation is a huge undertaking. It is expensive, time-consuming, and tedious. But printing Bibles can be a very profitable business. And so, translations are copyrighted. But what if you can convince people that the Bible you are printing for free is God's only inspired word? These people make – literally – millions of dollars.

Secondly, like any cult, if you claim that you have the only “something” that comes from God, you now have total sway over those you are leading. If your doctrine is based on the faulty King James Version, and someone in the congregation says, “But wait, that's

not how the NASB translates it!", then your theology is called into question, and it very well may be wrong. Poor Pastor Imperfect. He has made an error!

And so to tell your congregation that the KJV is inspired by God and no other translation is to be accepted – why, in fact, it is of the devil!, then you now have ease and comfort in your control over those otherwise difficult miscreants.

And thirdly, this type of practice comes down to pure laziness. Theology is hard work and walking around with an unopened and unread KJV is so much easier. The pastor will explain to you what you need to know, and that is sufficient for you. This is one of the largest problems within the church – simple laziness towards the things of God.

Those are but three of the innumerable reasons why people hold onto the inane teaching of KJV-onlyism. I will give the other side of the argument before we finish today. This is a sad mark on those people, and someday they must stand before the Lord and give an account for their beliefs, as we all will.

Next, it is of the highest value to believers that they read the Bible from cover to cover, that they read it constantly, and that they ask questions of it, and then mentally tie the various parts of it together into a unified whole. If you are not doing this, then you have absolutely no basis – at all – for accepting the doctrine of one person over another.

The teachings of RC Sproul, Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, John Calvin, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, John Hagee, Andy Woods, and Charlie Garrett – and any and all others – are actually on an exact same level with you. Your acceptance or dismissal of their teachings is subjective and without any real foundation. This is a thought that Solomon deals with in the proverbs –

"The first one to plead his cause seems right,
Until his neighbor comes and examines him." Proverbs 18:17

Each of these people or groups has a theology which sounded good to those who listened, and yet the divergence in doctrine between them is often as great as the difference between oxygen and lead. Someone gives his case, and it sounds good. But then you hear another argument and you say, "Yes, that sounds better." But without knowing the word, they could both be completely wrong, and you would never know it. There are people that spend their entire lives pursuing constitutional law. They argue over it, they debate it before courts, they present their cases to representatives and senators, and they fight against those who twist the true intent and meaning of what

the constitution is saying. As important as that is for each of us in the United States, it is actually of very little weight, value, and meaning in the greater scheme of things.

As you sit here, or in any other church, unless you have read your Bible, and unless you continue to read your Bible, how can you be sure of anything – literally anything – that you are told concerning this marvelous gift of God?

*The Word of God – holy, pure, and perfect too
It is given to satisfy man's weary soul
In this life we tread, let us take an eternal view
And allow the word to convert us to God's heavenly roll*

*There, in the Book of Life our names will be
Because we pursued His word and found Jesus
Innumerable redeemed, there by the glassy sea
Such a marvelous thing God has done for us*

*If we will just open the Bible, our own Book of Life
And accept what it says as holy and true
Then between us and God will end the strife
The word is given; to us life begins anew*

*Thank You, O God, for this marvelous word
In accepting its truths our place in heaven is forever assured*

II. Errors in Thinking

My hope, my desire, and my yearning for each of you is that you get to know this word. This doctrine series is fine, but it is simply an attempt to have you reason out what you should already know. This is why we have been going through the Bible, verse by verse, on Sunday morning and on Thursday evening.

Doctrine sermons are only as good as how they actually align with what the Bible says. In Acts, Paul said to those at Ephesus, "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). One cannot declare the whole counsel of God unless he teaches the whole word of God.

But in teaching – be it in the word of God, in constitutional law, in thermodynamics or astrophysics, or in some type of scientific, religious, or philosophic discipline – we as humans make logical errors in our thinking. These are known as fallacies.

Fallacies can be things we can do in our own heads without ever expressing them, we can type them up in an article for a newspaper or magazine (liberals are especially good at this type of thing), or we can pass them on to others in our speech. These things usually come about because we do not think critically.

A great way to think critically is to take a course on.... Yes! Critical Thinking. What is a category mistake? Well, if you don't know, then you might not see why Calvinism is wrong on so many points. What is a fallacy of illicit major? What if I said to you, "All cats are mammals. No dogs are cats. Therefore, no dogs are mammals."

You know that is incorrect, but you cannot reasonably explain where the error is. What is a red herring? What is an argument from popularity? What is a source fallacy? If you don't know what these things are, then you probably haven't got a clue as to why you are being led down the primrose path by a speaker, scholar, or commentary.

Not too long ago, I finished a line by line commentary of the book of 1 Peter. In verse 5:13 Peter says, "She who is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, greets you; and so does Mark my son." People argue over what Peter means by "Babylon." Is he speaking of the real Babylon, is he metaphorically speaking of Rome? Or is it something else.

Regardless as to the answer, one commentator that I read – one of my favorite commentators – cited the work of a guy named Professor Salmond, stating, "Professor Salmond, in his admirable commentary on this epistle, has so forcibly summed up the testimony that we cannot do better than to give his comment entire:" (Vincent's Word Studies).

In his quote, Professor Salmond makes several illogical arguments, he makes at least two fallacies – an argument from popularity and an argument from silence, and then he makes his faulty conclusion based on those things.

My goal next is to give you just a few fallacies that run through our heads so that you will not make these errors in the future. The first is so obvious that it is hard to know how we fall for it, and yet we do. It has become such a large problem within the church in recent years that it has stolen away countless thousands from the simple gospel of grace, or from simple proper doctrine.

It is the source, or genetic, fallacy that because someone is Jewish, he is authoritative to speak on a particular issue. This has grown so much in recent years because Israel is back her land, Hebrew is revived as a language, and the Jewish people are coming to Christ in large numbers.

Because of this, people make the immediate assumption that this particular person, or that guy over there, is a specialist simply because he speaks Hebrew and/or was raised in Israel. Others go even further and quote rabbis and rabbinic commentaries as if they were authoritative.

Such people have rejected Christ, and still reject Christ, and yet they are sought out because of who they are. Because of this, there are so many aberrant teachings on things like the Feasts of the Lord, or the Sabbath day, that it is almost impossible to find anyone who can give a proper biblical answer on those things.

And because people haven't taken the time to simply read their Bible, they just... go with it. "That sounds good to me. I'll go with it." And this is not limited to Jews, but to Arab Christians, or even – believe it or not – Muslims who have converted to Christianity. Because of the source, they are held in an esteem which is both improper and dangerous.

Paul says in Galatians 2-

"But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be *something* added nothing to me" (v.6).

The Galatians had gotten into an idol-fest because of Jews who came in, showed how holy they were through the teaching of a false gospel message, and had led the church astray. Paul had to deal with them forcefully and in a direct rebuke because of their inability to not think logically – they had fallen for the genetic fallacy.

And more, in both 2 Corinthians 11 and Philippians 3, and elsewhere, Paul gives a list of his own supposed qualifications – much greater than anyone else's – and yet he calls them as loss and as rubbish. They are not the basis of who he was as an apostle, and nor should they be the basis for what we think concerning others.

A second, similar, fallacy is trusting in someone because he knows a source language – for example Hebrew or Greek. Add in that they are Jewish and they speak the language,

and you have the perfect recipe for disaster. One of the people that I mentioned in a previous sermon, who teaches that Jesus was created by God, is both Jewish and speaks the biblical languages.

And yet he not only teaches that Jesus was created, but he also teaches that one can lose his salvation, and that the rapture is mid-tribulation, not pre-tribulation. If he can't get those basic points of doctrine correct, then he shouldn't be listened to. But... he is Jewish and he speaks Hebrew and Greek. So what!

Every single day as I type my own Bible commentary, and each week as I type a sermon, I read numerous commentaries from some of the finest Hebrew and Greek scholars in Christian history, going back hundreds of years, and yet they will come to completely opposite conclusions concerning very important verses, concepts, and even doctrines.

And so, the only thing that I have to rely on when I come to such divergent opinions is *my own understanding of Scripture*. If my knowledge of the word is limited, then my analysis of the word will also be faulty. Forget the fact that Pastor Imperfect knows Greek. That means less than nothing if he doesn't know how to tie his knowledge of Greek in with what the rest of the Bible is saying.

And that fallacy ties in with the next. Forget his race or culture. Forget whether he speaks Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. And also, please ignore the title that is placed before or after his name. That is a fallacy known as *an appeal to authority*. We look to titles, accredited degrees, or the place where someone was educated, as a mark of authority.

Do you know how many Doctors of Theology teach Calvinism or Wesleyanism? Do you know how many pastors and professors were educated at Yale or Harvard Divinity School? Nowadays, they don't even teach the Bible for the most part, and if they do, they dismiss it as a book of myths and nonsense.

Accepting someone's theology because he has a particular degree, or was schooled at a particular school, or has a particular title – such as “Reverend” – is a terrible way to place your trust in someone. Do any of you know what Jesse Jackson's title is? How about Al Sharpton?

Having said that, it is equally fallacious to dismiss someone *because* he has a certain degree, title, or place of education. People do that all the time as well, and it is equally as wrong. The only thing that matters in a presentation is if that which is presented is correct.

Another thing we should avoid is to assume that someone is a great preacher or teacher because of either his eloquence or rhetorical skills. How many of you would agree with the statement that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah? How many of you would agree with the following statement –

“The Jewish people have a relationship to God through the law of God as given through Moses... I believe that every Gentile person can only come to God through the cross of Christ. I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.” -John Hagee, April 30, 1988, Houston Chronicle

The man who said these things is one of the greatest orators that you might ever hear. He is confident in his presentation, dogmatic in what he barks out, and he is a first-class heretic. He clothes his sermons in Americanism, he presents flowery sermons which are powerful and stir the emotions, and yet, of those I have heard, very few – if any – were biblically accurate. I personally do not remember one.

He says that the Torah is the word of God, but he fails to acknowledge that it is only a part of the word of God, and that it speaks of one over-arching theme – the need to come to Jesus Christ. as He Himself said in John 5.

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” John 5:39, 40

Another preacher, who gave some of the finest sermons I have ever heard, and which were delivered with precision and conviction, admitted one night that he had never read the Old Testament. So, where did his theology come from? Even if it was correct, and it was, it was only by the grace of God that he was educated in one school rather than another. Because he didn’t get it from Scripture.

What a sad commentary on how we select our leaders, and on how we nearly idolize people without even considering what their standing with the very basis of our faith is. Such fallacies could go on and on. “He leads a 20,000 person church? So what! Is that any more important than a guy in rural Arkansas that leads a 50-person church?

“He’s been to Israel 47 times?” Yes, and Benny Hinn was raised there. So what!
“Everybody agrees with Him!” Yes, and everybody could be wrong. It doesn’t matter if 10,000 people teach that Yom Teruah is a picture of the rapture. If it isn’t (and it isn’t!),

then it is a false teaching. That is what is known as “The Bandwagon Fallacy.”
“Everybody climb aboard! The more on the bandwagon, the truer this will become.” No, it doesn’t work that way.

For now, that is enough fallacies. You get the point. What I would ask of you is to be reasonable in your thinking, dogged in your pursuit of sniffing out the truth, and fervent in your desire to read the word. Read it when you rise. Read it during the day. Play it on the radio as you drive. Think on it, meditate on it, talk about it, and let it fill your heart and your soul as you come in and as you go out. And in the evening, before going to bed, pick it up and read it again.

I know some of you have it with you in bed at night, right under your pillow, but that means of learning is untrue. Biblical osmosis has been scientifically proven to not work. You will have to expand your brain cells through active participation with the word. And when you do, I know that the Lord will be pleased with your efforts. I know He will.

And so now, before we close, I want to read you some highlights from the original preface to the King James Version. This preface is exceedingly long, very hard to read and understand, and at times tedious. One might think that this is why it is no longer published with the King James Version, but that is not correct.

The reason for this is because it dispels every single myth that KJV Only adherents hold to. And if it were known to the general populace, then those who profit so greatly off the word of God, in the manner in which they do, would no longer have that giant source of revenue filling their unholy coffers.

And, people would actually start to obtain sound theology by doing what the King James translators suggested when they put forth their very faulty, but admirable translation. Their words speak of the word of God, the basis of our faith. If people cannot get something as basic as what they say correct, then how susceptible are we as humans to the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

There are numerous quotes in this lengthy preface which speak of using reason when handling the word of God. I have selected only a few for you today. The rest are recorded and explained on my website for those who wish to know more.

Nay, we will yet come nearer the quick: doth not their Paris edition differ from the Lovaine, and Hentenius his from them both, and yet all of them allowed by authority? Nay, doth not Sixtus Quintus confess, that certain Catholics (he meaneth certain of his

own side) were in such an humor of translating the Scriptures into Latin, that Satan taking occasion by them, though they thought of no such matter, did strive what he could, out of so uncertain and manifold a variety of Translations, so to mingle all things, that nothing might seem to be left certain and firm in them, etc.? [Sixtus 5. praefat. fixa Bibliis.] Nay, further, did not the same Sixtus ordain by an inviolable decree, and that with the counsel and consent of his Cardinals, that the Latin edition of the old and new Testament, which the Council of Trent would have to be authentic, is the same without controversy which he then set forth, being diligently corrected and printed in the Printing-house of Vatican? Thus Sixtus in his Preface before his Bible. And yet Clement the Eighth his immediate successor, published another edition of the Bible, containing in it infinite differences from that of Sixtus, (and many of them weighty and material) and yet this must be authentic by all means.

The finger of the translators of the King James Version not only points back in time to those who accuse translators of various translations of being in bed with Satan, but they point forward to modern King James Only adherents who make exactly the same claim.

Further, they make it quite clear that those named translations and editions are all authoritative. And more, they go on and name other Bibles, stating they too are also of equal authority, even though they had “infinite differences” between them. Despite all of these variations in numerous translations, they state that each is authentic.

Has God completely lost control of His word? The answer is “No.” He has protected this marvelous gift and has given us the honor and responsibility of searching it out and using reason when we approach it. It may be that translations by man have problems, as the KJV certainly does, but God’s message still goes forth, even through such marginal translations as it.

Therefore as S. Augustine saith, that variety of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures: [S. Aug. 2. de doct. Christian. cap. 14.] so diversity of signification and sense in the margin, where the text is no so clear, must needs do good, yea, is necessary, as we are persuaded.

The King James Version translation committee agrees that a *variety* of Translations is profitable for finding out the sense of Scripture. And not only that, but marginal notes for those “no so clear” areas are not only a little ok, but they are “must needs do good” and are necessary.

They that are wise, had rather have their judgments at liberty in differences of readings, than to be captivated to one, when it may be the other.

According to the translators, the wise should search out *varied* translations. The opposite then, would show a lack of scholarship by those captivated by one translation. It is exactly why we use at least two versions during our Thursday night Bible study, and I refer to between 20 and 25 versions for each sermon I type. I would also say that sticking to one teacher of the Bible is equally damaging and that multiple teachers, may bring you to a better understanding of the truth.

Add hereunto, that niceness in words was always counted the next step to trifling, and so was to be curious about names too: also that we cannot follow a better pattern for elocution than God himself; therefore he using divers words, in his holy writ, and indifferently for one thing in nature: [see Euseb. li. 12. ex Platon.] we, if we will not be superstitious, may use the same liberty in our English versions out of Hebrew and Greek, for that copy or store that he hath given us.

The translators say God uses diverse words in His holy word to make a point and that we should feel free to do the same through *multiple* translations in the English (or any) language.

As you can see, from this final sermon in our doctrine series, a sermon which actually contains almost no doctrine in and of itself, there is an immense need to do one thing above all else, and there is another thing which supports that first matter. We are to read and study the word of God, in its fullness, in order to know God and what He expects of us.

And the thing which supports that first matter is that we are to use reason in our pursuit of this word as we do so. If we are willing to do these two things, we will be on a sure footing as we proceed on our happy trek to our even happier home where we will fellowship with our Creator for all eternity.

Don't squander your time. What you do right now has bearing on what you will be doing for all eternity. This word tells us of our state before God, of what God has done to correct that state, and what that correction means for the human soul.

And throughout the entire word – this precious gift of God – there is one point of highlight that radiates forth from it – the promise and then the coming of Messiah. The whole body of Scripture testifies to the Person and work of Jesus Christ. May we never

be found deficient in our pursuit of this word, because in pursuing this word, we will be pursuing the love of God in Christ – to the glory of God the Father.

Closing Verse: *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12*

BONUS CONTENT:
SHORT DOCTRINAL LESSON ON 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

Please follow one of these links, [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#), to watch a short video (approx. 4 min) discussing how 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 fits into the discussion on Eternal Security vs Loss of Salvation.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

WHAT HAPPENS TO LITTLE BABIES WHEN THEY DIE?

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Many believe that all babies are automatically given a free ticket to heaven the moment they die. However, there is a problem with that belief. It is based on what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7. Paul is addressing the sanctity of marriage, but he introduces a point that cannot be overlooked when carefully considered.

One issue that brings up this point about babies is the rapture. Many believe that when the rapture happens, all little babies on the planet will be taken up with believers. But is this biblical? What about babies that die when they are young?

Issues like these are often not handled in a responsible manner. Because this teaching is so prevalent, this study will begin by using the rapture as a starting point and then continue to evaluate the issue of infant salvation from various perspectives.

Regarding the rapture, the disposition of unsaved humanity has nothing to do with it. The rapture is for believers and those sanctified by those believers, as Paul clearly indicates in 1 Corinthians 7:14 –

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.”

Paul is unambiguously stating a position intended to quell the terrifying idea that the children of believers do not share in their rights because they are not yet of whatever age or state (think of a mentally challenged child) to make their own decision for Christ. They are, in fact, covered by God’s grace because of the believing parent. For the believing parent to remove himself or herself from the equation is to remove the child from a state of sanctification, meaning the child will be unclean.

What does “unclean” mean? It means stained with sin. Despite being a baby, the effects of Adam’s sin are imputed to the child. As clear and obvious proof of this, all we need to do is ask a simple series of questions: “What happens when a baby dies? Does it stay dead or does it come back to life? If it does not come back to life. Why not?”

The point is that Jesus did not sin. Because He did not sin, He resurrected. The reason for this is explained by Peter in Acts 2:24, where he said, “it was not possible that He

should be held by” death. Why? Because death is the effect of sin. If a baby had no sin, it would, by default and by Scripture’s precedent in Jesus, resurrect. Death could not hold that baby. However, Paul says they are unclean. The stain of sin rests upon all humanity from conception, exactly as David and Paul refer to (below).

The only thing addressed last week was, “Do all babies get taken at the rapture?” If there are children who are unclean, they are – by default – not included in the covenant graces explained by Paul. Thus, the answer is, “No.”

This does not, however, suddenly mean that all these babies (as I have been repeatedly accused of saying over the years) go to hell. That is not my decision. Nor is it my decision if they are going the heaven.

To understand this issue takes putting emotions (oh! The emotions!) aside. God is logical, He has expressed His word in a manner that we can understand, and He expects us to take it in the proper context. And more, God is impassionate. If you believe in a God who makes decisions based on emotions, you do not believe in the God of the Bible.

Unfortunately, as soon as emotional issues are introduced, people lose control of sound doctrine and forget the simple and fundamental responsibilities of taking things in context and rightly dividing the word.

Inevitably, to justify that all babies are saved, several passages are ripped out of their intended context in order to form a pretext, thus “proving” that all babies are going to heaven. As such, in their minds, it logically follows that they will be taken out at the rapture. Paul has clearly negated that thought in 1 Corinthians 7.

As for the main passage that is used to “prove” that all babies are going to heaven, it is... anyone? That’s right, 2 Samuel 12:23. David did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. Because of what he did, the Lord told him the child that was conceived during an adulterous relationship would die. David petitioned the Lord for his child, but the child died. At that, it says –

“So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. ²¹ Then his servants said to him, ‘What *is* this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child *while he was* alive, but when the child died, you arose and

ate food.'

²² And he said, 'While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, "Who can tell *whether* the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" ²³ But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'"

There it is! The supposed "proof" that all babies are going to heaven. As with all other arguments for infant salvation, they are a set of words ripped out of the context in order to form a pretext. Where do people go when they die?

The answer has been the same since the death of the first man – *Sheol*, the place of the dead. David understood this –

"Return, O Lord, deliver me!

Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!

⁵ For in death *there is* no remembrance of You;

In the grave [*Sheol*] who will give You thanks?" Psalm 6:5

This was a universally understood precept in Israel because it is based on the word of God. Even Job, outside of the covenant people knew this. When David's child died, he went to Sheol. David understood this and knew it was his end as well. In the New Testament, Hades answers to Sheol. It is the place of the dead. This is why Paul said this–

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming." 1 Cor 15:20-23

Explaining that, he says –

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:50-52

Paul exactly explains that there are two categories of people in regard to what he is referring to: they are asleep (meaning dead and in Sheol/Hades) or they are still alive. That's it. Those are the only two options Paul speaks of. As a result of that, he then says—

“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’

⁵⁵ ‘O Death, where *is* your sting?

O Hades, where *is* your victory?’” 1 Corinthians 15:54, 54

All Christians, both alive and dead, are currently in a state of corruption. None have been made incorrupt yet. We still bear the effects of sin even though we are in Christ. Until we are raptured, that will not change. Until then, Paul says, quite clearly and without any ambiguity, that in our corruption, when we die we go to Hades, where Christ was. When the rapture occurs, our corruption will be replaced with incorruption. Hades will no longer have dominion over the dead.

The words “absent from the body, present with the Lord,” Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 5 do not mean we go to heaven when we die. If they did, we would have a glaring contradiction in Paul's letters. They mean we are the Lord's and He has full control over us. This is a truth that exists even right now. We are present with the Lord. When we die, that state does not change.

Jesus descended into Hades as noted in Acts 2:27-31, citing Psalm 16 —

“For You will not leave my soul in Hades [Sheol],
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’

²⁹ “Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

He became the first to break those bonds, rising from the dead as the Firstfruits of those who were to later be raised. Nobody has gone to heaven yet because there has been no

judgment seat of Christ to allow them access to heaven. Until our corruption is replaced with incorruption at the rapture, there is no judgment seat of Christ. One plus one will always equal two in proper theology.

As such, and still looking over the issue of David, where is he now?

“Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

³⁴ *‘For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:*

“The Lord said to my Lord,

‘Sit at My right hand,

³⁵ *Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.””” Acts 2:29-34*

What will happen to David someday? He will not be raised at the rapture. Rather, it says in Daniel 12:2 (etc.) concerning Old Testament saints –

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,

Some to everlasting life,

Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

³ *Those who are wise shall shine*

Like the brightness of the firmament,

And those who turn many to righteousness

Like the stars forever and ever.

...

“But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” Daniel 12:2-3, & 13

What will happen after David is raised? Four times (Ezekiel 34:23, 24 & 37:24, 25) it notes that David will be king (shepherd) over Israel in the millennium. Obviously, this could mean the greater King, Jesus, but Daniel and the other OT saints expected to be raised at the time of the millennial reign of Christ. Even Martha expected this as

indicated in John 11:24. As Martha lived beyond Christ's resurrection, she now has the hope of the rapture, not the resurrection of the Old Covenant saints.

As such, David's words about going to be with his son have nothing to do with heaven. He knew his son went to Sheol. He knew he was going to Sheol. And Peter confirms that he is not in heaven, but in Sheol. So how can we derive a doctrine about babies going to heaven from verses that have nothing to do with going to heaven?

But even if you incorrectly but adamantly state that David will somehow join his son in heaven (in complete violation of the references already noted), what was David's status? He was of the covenant community.

As such, it can be inferred that the same provision exists for David's son as applies to what Paul argues for in 1 Corinthians 7:14. This does not extend to those outside of faith in the coming Messiah, and it does not extend to those outside of the believing members of the church.

But what about Job? What about Job? Job was a member of the believers in God's Messiah. He was a son of God as evidenced in Job 1:6 and 2:1, verses not speaking of angels but of believers in the promise of Messiah. Job 19:25-27 bears this out –

“For I know *that* my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this *I know*,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!”

As for the unsaved. Their dead, of all ages, go to Sheol. The difference between saved believers and the unsaved is that unbelievers will be judged according to Revelation 20:12-15 –

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second

death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

What will happen to those people, including the babies who died? That is up to God. God is perfectly just, and God will do nothing unjust. What He determines will come to pass. The Bible does not say what will happen to anyone who dies as an infant, an aborted baby, a mentally retarded person, etc. Those things are up to God. But this is what the Bible proclaims. It does not teach, ever, that babies automatically go to heaven when they die.

Jesus prevailed over the temptation before Him. In our faith in Jesus, we are brought into a state of salvation because we transfer our headship from Adam to Him. The authority the devil possesses over humanity is broken through our faith. All are conceived in sin and born in sin according to Psalm 51:5.

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.”

David understood this. Paul reconfirms it in Romans 5:12-14 –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned — ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. Until one comes to Christ, he belongs to the devil. He is unclean. This is what Paul is trying to explain to us (really, he’s trying). We need Jesus. Every person on this planet needs Jesus. Without Jesus, all remain unclean. And only through Jesus are we made clean.

To make an exception and say that babies are exempt from this process is exactly the same thing as what Roman Catholicism has done with Mary in the doctrine of immaculate conception. The only difference between the two is the later effect of sin is somehow imputed at some undetermined point upon children (maybe when they tell their first lie to mommy). This is adamantly argued as true by people who cannot stomach the righteousness of God being applied to a fallen human baby as explained by Paul in Romans 5.

It diminishes the work of the cross, negates the grace of God as explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, and renders the gospel of Jesus Christ useless. We have a job to do, which is to tell people about the effects of sin. When we don't do that, there are real consequences for our actions. Instead of arguing for a doctrine that the Bible does not teach, try going to your neighbor's house and telling them about the plight they and their families are in without Jesus.

The devil understands our position in Christ and the power of the gospel. He wants nothing more than to disarm our power in Him. If he can do this through people unwilling to study what Scripture says about such important issues or those who will base their doctrine on their emotions, he will gladly do so. The power we are given is our faith. And our faith should lead us to share with others the faith we possess.

We don't need verses pulled out of their context such as what happened to David's son, or other verses from Job, Ezekiel, Jonah, and so forth, to somehow justify what the Bible never teaches. Instead, we are to obtain our doctrine from the New Testament epistles, taken in their proper context.

For now, if our faith is weakened, then our testimony is weakened. When that happens, we are no longer telling others about Jesus, and souls that could be transferred from Adam to Jesus will never hear the gospel. The devil hates humanity and wants nothing more than for it to be eternally condemned with him.

However, Jesus prevailed, and His offer stands for all people to receive. But this is only going to come about by people of faith telling others the good news. It will not happen by providing false assurances based on faulty hermeneutics which are based on emotional kneejerk reactions to our fallen human state.

WHERE DO BELIEVERS GO WHEN THEY DIE? WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

In the church, some people are evangelists, some are missionaries, some are preachers, etc. Among preachers, there are the uplifters, the charlatans, the comforters, etc. I am a preacher, and my focus is the word, especially proper doctrine from the word.

One point of doctrine that is misapplied more often than not is that of what happens to believers when they die. Because of so much faulty teaching on this subject that permeates the church, people generally have a completely misguided sense of the matter.

The Bible is not confused. Rather, when things are translated or taught incorrectly, it causes people to become confused

Bryan Johnson is a wealthy tech entrepreneur who reportedly spends over two million dollars per year in hopes of reversing aging and avoiding death. He renounced Mormonism and lives totally for his own continued existence. *People Magazine* says –

“To put his body in its ‘ideal state,’ Johnson told Don’t Die filmmakers that he follows a strict daily routine that includes over a hundred different practices. Those practices include taking 54 pills throughout the day, eating a few pounds of vegetables, having dinner at 11 a.m., an hour-long workout and going to bed at 8:30 p.m. every night.”

Among other things, he also swaps blood with his son and his dad. Somehow, he thinks he is going to live forever. The Bible, however, says otherwise.

It would be ironic if he keeled over in his vegetables one day. But along with medical issues, it is impossible to control car accidents, slipping in the shower, or having his house come down on him in an earthquake. One cannot plan his way out of acts of God or the ways of man.

Bryan Johnson could use his time a lot more productively and maybe a little more freely while awaiting the inevitable, enjoying himself along the way as he goes. In the movie *Grumpy Old Men*, Burgess Meredith, while having a beer and talking with his son, said –

“Last Thursday, I turned 95 years old. And I never exercised a day in my life. Every morning I wake up and I smoke a cigarette, and then I eat five strips of bacon, and for lunch, I eat a bacon sandwich. And for a midday snack, bacon! A whole d*** plate. And I usually drink my dinner. Now, according to all them flat-belly experts, I should’ve took a dirt nap like 30 years ago. But each year comes and goes, and I’m still here... ha! And they keep dying. You know, sometimes I wonder if God forgot about me.”

Though just a movie, people who live like this often live just as long as anyone else. As far as God forgetting someone though, unless the Lord comes first, we all have a meeting with Him. There is no escaping the inevitable. But there is good news for those who know the Lord...

Text Verse: *“I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And I will glorify Your name forevermore.*

¹³ For great is Your mercy toward me,

And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.” Psalm 86:12, 13

David spoke as if his life was threatened to the point of entering Sheol. And yet, the Lord delivered him from that. Eventually, however, David did die, and he went to that place where all people are set to go to. Is there hope for such as him?

Job knew there was and boldly proclaimed that he knew his Redeemer lived and that he would stand before Him someday. This is the hope of mankind, to be delivered to a state where death no longer can affect us. Bryan Johnson is counting on pills, vegetables, exercise, other people’s blood, and such to deliver him from death.

Others know there is a God and that He has the power to deliver even the dead from that state. But which “God,” or which expression of God that man has encountered is correct? We can know 100% and for certain by reviewing history.

One Man alone has come back from Sheol, proving several things in the process. He proved that He was without sin because the wages of sin is death. He proved that He is fully God because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

But Jesus, the sinless Son of God, prevailed over death. And He promises those who believe in Him that He will likewise bring them back from death as well. The sermon today will explain the process of how that happens.

What happens to believers in Jesus Christ when they die? Stay tuned and you will find out. It is a process, and it is described in God’s superior word. And so, let us turn to that

precious word once again, and... May God speak to us through His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Sheol, The Repository for the Dead

Despite being the most tragic event to happen to humans, death is a part of who we are and what we will experience as we watch others die and as we eventually come to our own end. The old saying, “Nothing is certain but death and taxes” fails to acknowledge the ability of people to cheat their way out of paying taxes.

However, death is a certainty that will come to pass in all of us unless the Lord comes for His people first. Kilroy J. Oldster said –

“Death is the great equalizer of human beings. Death is the boundary that we need to measure the precious texture of our lives. All people owe a death. There is no use vexing about inevitable degeneration and death because far greater people than me succumbed to death’s endless sleep without living as many years as me.”

Despite death being a constant theme in Scripture, as for what happens to people who die, when they do, the Bible doesn’t give a lot of specifics on it.

There are two types of death that are highlighted. The first is spiritual death. That is, surprisingly, a state of death we are born with. How can that be? We are born into life, not death! Rather, we are born into physical life, but we are born spiritually dead.

The first hint of this came in Genesis 2, on the 6th day of creation, and it is the first time that death is mentioned in Scripture –

“Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

-Genesis 2:15-17

God was not referring to physical death at this time. This is obvious from the next chapter. Adam did eat the fruit, and he didn’t die. So was the Lord wrong, or was He was trying to intentionally scare Adam by lying to him? Rather, He was speaking of a different state of death than Adam’s physical being, a spiritual death.

That it was a spiritual death is confirmed by Paul, but what is understood is that the spiritual death leads directly to the physical death that man experiences. That is seen in Genesis 3 –

“Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat of it”:

‘Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat *of* it

All the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you *are*,

And to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:17-19

As for physical death, the first record of that happening is found in Genesis 4 –

“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.” Genesis 4:8

Concerning the state of spiritual death we are born with, Paul confirms that it is so in Romans 5 –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.” Romans 5:12-14

First and foremost, Paul is speaking of spiritual death here. This is certain because he notes that sin entered the world through Adam and death spread to all men. If death spread to all men through Adam, who was alive physically but spiritually dead through sin, then he must be referring to spiritual death.

He also says that sin is not imputed where there is no law. Other than the law given to Adam, no other law is recorded in Scripture before the birth of Cain and Abel. And yet, Paul says that death spread to all men.

If sin comes through law and there was no other law by which sin is imputed, then it means that Paul is referring to spiritual death that is transmitted from father to child. Our physical deaths are merely a result of our spiritually dead state.

As for physical death, there is a lot said about it in Scripture. Chapter 5 of Genesis lists the generations of Adam, with the exception of Enoch, who was taken by God, and Noah, who ends the chapter, it notes that Adam and each of his descendants died. So from Genesis 2 through Genesis 5, it is like reading a smorgasbord about death.

All of that death, however, would be eclipsed by the events of Genesis 6 & 7 where God destroyed the entire world by flood with the exception of Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Genesis 8 is the first chapter since Genesis 2 where nothing about a person's death is specifically mentioned. Instead, the Lord promised that He would never again destroy every living thing as He had done.

But death still reigned. At the end of Genesis 9, Noah is said to have died. Genesis 11 provides the genealogical list of Noah's son Shem with the years they lived. At the end of Genesis 11, Terah, Abraham's Father is said to have died.

This seemingly endless succession of death continued all the way through the Old Testament. With the exception of Enoch and later Elijah, every person who lived also died.

Different explanations about death are spattered throughout Genesis. Terms such as being buried, dying in a "good old age," or being gathered to one's people, are given to explain death, but the place where they go is only first mentioned in Genesis 37 where Jacob says –

"And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, 'For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.' Thus his father wept for him." Genesis 37:35

The word translated there as grave is *sh'ol*, a noun coming from *sha'al*, to ask. Thus, it means Asked For. It is understood from the rest of the Old Testament that this is the place where all the dead go. However, what happens there is not described in any detail.

Outside of some poetic and prophetic proclamations, the only real hint that can be derived from being in Sheol is found in 1 Samuel 28. King Saul was out of options concerning what lay in store for a battle coming the next day. The Lord did not respond to his requests for guidance, and so he went to the witch at En Dor to consult the dead. There it says –

“Then the woman said, ‘Whom shall I bring up for you?’

And he said, ‘Bring up Samuel for me.’

¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, ‘Why have you deceived me? For you *are* Saul!’

¹³ And the king said to her, ‘Do not be afraid. What did you see?’

And the woman said to Saul, ‘I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth.’

¹⁴ So he said to her, ‘What *is* his form?’

And she said, ‘An old man is coming up, and he *is* covered with a mantle.’ And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground and bowed down.

¹⁵ Now Samuel said to Saul, ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?’”

-1 Samuel 28:11-15

As noted, other than some poetic and prophetic literature that explains things about Sheol, this is the only instance where such a thing occurs. All we can glean from it is that Saul had disturbed Samuel by being called up from Sheol. It was as if he was peacefully sleeping, and Saul’s arousing him was unwelcome.

When Adam fell, death spread to all men

And so all in Adam die

When our numbered days are finished, it is over... and then

Where do we go? Up to the sky?

We who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ

Are set to die unless the rapture happens first

But with His shed blood, our souls were priced

And so, death in us will surely be reversed

God promises that it is so

We have no need to doubt that it is true

Because of Jesus, we can fully know

That to us eternal life God will endue

II. Where Believers Go When They Die

If you ask people where they will go when they die, you'll get a lot of different answers. A rather common one, however, is "I don't know." Many people give no thought about it despite the fact that death is the anticipated end for all people.

As for nonbelievers, nothing has changed. When they die, they go to the same place as man has gone to since the beginning. It isn't like God whipped up something new for the dead just because man has gone from Old Testament times to New.

This is made clear in Scripture, and it is not really debated by scholars. However, if you ask believers where they will go when they die, the almost universal answer is, "To heaven." They don't qualify it like, "My ultimate end is in heaven." And so even if they know that is the case, they simply say, "To heaven."

But the ultimate place for believers isn't the question being addressed in this sermon. The question is, "Where do believers go when they die," meaning the right away part. If you were to ask it that way, it is still pretty certain the answer is, "I'm going to heaven."

It is as if they will die one minute and be in heaven the next. Is this what happens? The answer is found in Scripture, but it takes a bit of work, a proper understanding of certain doctrines, and laying emotions, biases, and presuppositions aside.

As a spoiler alert, I will give the answer and then defend it. This may prematurely weed out the people who refuse to lay aside their emotions, biases, and presuppositions. But their failure to finish the contents of the sermon will only hinder their understanding of Scripture.

The answer is that believers who die do not go directly to heaven. Being believers, that is their final destination, but it is not the first stop on the trip. Paul states this explicitly in his writings, but it is particularly clear in 1 Corinthians 15. There are verses that seem to contradict this, but they will be dealt with as we go.

Where believers go when they die now is the same place where people went in the Old Testament and where nonbelievers since the time of Christ also go, Sheol. The corresponding word in Greek is Hades.

We can know with all certainty that Sheol and Hades are the same because of what it says in Acts 2, where Peter cites Psalm 16, a messianic psalm about the death of Jesus –

“For You will not leave my soul in Hades [*Sheol* as recorded in the psalm], Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’

²⁹ “Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. Acts 2:27-31

Jesus went to Hades. He resurrected from Hades. But that leaves an obvious question to be considered and answered, “What about what He said to the thief on the cross?”

“But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’

⁴³ And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’” Luke 23:40-43

See! See! This proves that people go to heaven. Actually, no. It doesn’t. Peter said that Jesus, citing the 16th Psalm and referring to the words of Jesus in death, was in Hades (Sheol). Therefore, what people think about Paradise being heaven is flawed.

The word *paradeisos*, translated as Paradise, is found only three times in the New Testament. It is also found nineteen times in the Greek Old Testament (Genesis 2:8, 2:9, 2:10, 2:15, 2:16, 3:1, 3:2, 3:3, 3:8 (twice), 3:9, 3:23, 3:24, 13:10; Joel 2:3; Ezekiel 28:13, 31:8 (twice), 31:9). None of these refer to heaven.

This is because it doesn’t mean heaven. It is a Persian word signifying an enclosure or park. Thus, it can mean a place in heaven, like in Revelation 2:7, or it can mean a place in Hades, like in Luke 23. It can also be a place on earth that is idyllic in nature. We think of paradise as somewhere else, but it can be right here. We used to have a paradise right out on Siesta Key. Since Helene and Milton... not so much.

Jesus went to Sheol/Hades. When there, He was in a paradise. He gives an example of this in the parable of Lazarus. In Hades, there were two separate and distinct realms. The one at Abraham’s side would be a state of paradise. The other... not so much. And

more, this doesn't mean that there are only two places in Hades. It simply means that there are at least two places in Hades.

Heaven is a different word, *ouranos*. But even it – in both Testaments – has various meanings. It can refer to the sky, the starry heavens, the spiritual heavens, and so forth.

The word is derived from *oros*, a mountain or hill. Thus, it speaks of elevation. The context of the word *ouranos* in each usage is needed to determine what is being referred to.

The next obvious question to arise from some is, “Wha.. wha... What about Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8. They ‘prove’ that all believers go straight to heaven!” Actually, no they don’t. The NKJV, like most translations, renders these verses in a rather flawed manner, but we will go with it for now –

“So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 5:6-8

With merely a surface read, people immediately jump to the conclusion that one thing leads directly to the next and that all believers are taken lickety-split to heaven. It is even a common misquote: “Absent from the body; present with the Lord,” forgetting that the word “and” rests between the clauses.

However, suppose someone were to argue that the words mean both being absent from the body and being present with the Lord. The Bible doesn’t say this, but from an academic point, we could argue for that. To answer, we can start with a question: Are we as believers with the Lord now?

The answer depends on what “with the Lord” means, but for the believer, the answer should be obvious. We are in Christ. There is physical absence (or presence) with the Lord (or with others), and there is spiritual absence (or presence).

Obviously, these things depend on whether a person is saved or not. But to see a practical example of this, in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul uses the same terminology toward those in Corinth.

He notes his physical presence, and he notes his spiritual presence. Likewise, any believer who is in Christ is... in Christ. He is present with the Lord. That is a truth that permeates Paul’s writings. There is no time we are not present with the Lord.

Referring to 1 Corinthians 5, Paul writes concerning this dual nature of presence concerning himself –

“For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

-1 Corinthians 5:3-5

But more pertinent to Paul’s words about being present with the Lord, are his words in their full context from 2 Corinthians 5 because, as we are aware, context matters.

Again, these words are from the NKJV. It follows the KJV and it is not well rendered, but we will go with it for now with explanations as we progress –

“For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed [meaning death], we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens [something that occurs at the resurrection as indicated in 1 Corinthians 15]. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven [our permanent, glorified body that comes at the resurrection], ³ if indeed, having been clothed [meaning in a body], we shall not be found naked [a soul without a body, meaning Hades]. ⁴ For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened [living in our current state], not because we want to be unclothed [dying – the soul without the body], but further clothed [death is a state of being unclothed, an unnatural state that occurs until we receive our heavenly body, our “further clothed”], that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶ So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body [our current clothing] we are absent [physically absent] from the Lord [because we are in a state of corruption]. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body [our state of corruption] and to be present with the Lord [a state of incorruption, but Paul does not say that this is immediate, as if all suddenly go to heaven. He is simply making a point that we cannot be present with the Lord while in this corruptible body].

⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present [he uses the same word here as in verse 6 and indicating being at home in the body] or [better ‘whether’ the same

word just used in this verse – “whether present”] absent [he uses the same word as in verse 6 and indicating to be absent from the Lord], to be well pleasing to Him [Paul could not say this if we immediately went to heaven because we would be with a body in a state of incorruption if we were with Jesus in heaven]. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ [all believers, both alive and asleep, gathered at the resurrection for their coming judgment], that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.”

If we are naked at death but supposedly go to heaven, then we would be bodiless souls in heaven, something the Bible never teaches. But more, one of the problems with understanding this passage properly is the faulty nature of most translations. They obscure what Paul is saying by mistranslating the participles. For example, a literal translation of verses 6-9 says –

“Therefore, encouraging always, and having known that dwelling in the body we emigrating from Lord. ⁷ For through faith we roam [*peripateó*: tread around], not by sight. ⁸ And we *are* confident, and we approve more, emigrated from the body, and dwell with the Lord. ⁹ And therefore, we affectionate – if dwelling, if emigrating – acceptable to Him *to be* (CG).

Paul’s words in verse 9 about being absent are based on what he said in verse 6, not verse 8. It is the same word in both as well as verse 8, but the use of the present participle in verse 6 and again in verse 9 shows us this with certainty.

And, as noted above, Paul could not say this if we immediately went to heaven (emigrated) because we would be in a body in a state of incorruption if we were with Jesus in heaven. As such, we *would* be pleasing. It wouldn’t be our desire (affectionating) but our reality.

The only time we can desire (affectionate) to please the Lord is when we are alive. When we die (emigrate), regardless where we actually go, our eternal state is sealed. Notice the chiastic structure that is found throughout Paul’s writings, and which is also seen here –

- a. ⁶ Therefore, encouraging always (motivation)
- b. Having known that dwelling in the body we emigrating from Lord (our state)
- c. ⁷ For through faith we roam, not by sight (our condition)
- d. ⁸ And we confident (our state will be...)
 - x. and we approve more (OUR GREAT DESIRE!)
- d. Emigrated from the body, and dwell with the Lord (our state will be...)
 - c. ⁹ And therefore, we affectionate (our condition)
- b. If dwelling, if emigrating (our state)
- a. Acceptable to Him *to* be (result)

Again, and further, Paul does not equate being absent from the body to being present with the Lord. He says that being absent from the body, meaning our current state of corruption, is *less desirable* than to be present with the Lord. That is why he spoke in verse 4 about groaning and being burdened.

It is also why he goes on to speak of the judgment seat of Christ in verses 10 & 11. The two thoughts complement each other. It is as if he is shouting out, "Anything but being here bearing this burden of life! When I mess up, judgment for my faults lies ahead."

Unfortunately, bad translations often equate to bad theology. In this instance, Paul's use of the word *kai*, and signifies two things, not one. It is *approved more* to be absent from the body, *and* it is *approved more* to be present with the Lord. This doesn't mean they occur together. That was seen in the analysis above, and it will be explained further as we continue.

The point that Paul is making is that even when we die, we are in Christ. Paul addresses this in several ways in at least two letters. It is the main point of his words in 1 Thessalonians 4: –

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with

them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

-1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

It is understood from Paul's words that the people of Thessalonica were under the impression that those who had died might not be a part of what the Lord promised. But he tells them otherwise.

In these words, as in 1 Corinthians 15, which will be evaluated momentarily, Paul exactly explains that there are two categories of people in regard to what he is referring to: they are asleep (meaning dead and in Sheol/Hades) or they are still alive.

That's it. Those are the only two options Paul speaks of. The logic of Paul's words from earlier is, "Better to be asleep in Hades than to be here in this sin-sack."

But wait. Let's stop and address an issue that always comes up concerning such an analysis about death. There is the inane accusation floating around that teaching soul sleep is heresy.

First, Paul says that the dead in Christ are... anyone? Yes, asleep. In fact, he says it many times. Jesus said the same thing about Lazarus in John 11, and Luke recorded it concerning both David of Old Testament times and Stephen, the first martyr recorded in New Testament times.

The implication is that nothing has changed between the dispensations. The same content state that Samuel felt before he was disturbed by Saul is what each departed believer to this day experiences.

Second, he notes (as indicated above) that the soul without a body is the state of a person when he dies. If the soul without a body is his state, and if the state of the person is asleep, then the person's soul is... asleep. One plus one always equals two in proper theology.

This doesn't mean the person is not aware. The interaction between Samuel and Saul shows us this. He was aware and he was resting comfortably, something that can be inferred from his words. He was in Sheol, the same place where believers today go, meaning Hades (as explained already).

Third, whoever started the "teaching soul sleep is a heresy" doesn't know what a heresy is. If it is incorrect, it would simply be bad doctrine, not a heresy. Further, such a person

doesn't know the Bible very well. Saying that is merely a tactic to scare people into a false belief about going to heaven as soon as you die, which the Bible doesn't teach.

Fourth, to claim that those who died have been resurrected to heaven means that the resurrection... has happened. If that were true, there wouldn't be any believers left to talk about it. It is exactly what Paul calls "straying from the truth" in his letter to Timothy –

"And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸ who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. ¹⁹ Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

-2 Timothy 2:17-19

In all instances where the resurrection is spoken of, it is either explicit or implied that this involves both the living and the dead in the church.

That is seen, for example, in Paul's next words in 1 Corinthians 15. They are perfectly in line with what we have seen so far, meaning that there are only two categories of people at this time, they are 1) asleep (meaning dead and in Sheol/Hades), or 2) still alive. He says –

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [meaning those who have died in the church since Christ's completed work]. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die [Greek: present tense], even so in Christ all shall be made alive [Greek: future tense]. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming."

-1 Corinthians 15:20-23

People who are dead in Christ "have fallen asleep." That will remain unchanged until "His coming." Has Christ come yet? Again, one plus one will always equal two in proper theology. Further explaining this, he says –

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed [Greek: future tense]— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the

dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

-1 Corinthians 15:50-52

Paul continues to explain that those who have died are... are... anyone? Yes! Asleep! They will remain in that state until the time of the rapture, not before. He further confirms this as he continues, saying...

“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’

⁵⁵ ‘O Death, where *is* your sting?

O Hades, where *is* your victory?’” 1 Corinthians 15:54, 55

Paul could not say this if the people who died were not still in Hades. It would be a perfectly pointless pronouncement. If people who died were immediately taken to heaven, then the victory over Hades would have come before our state of incorruption, meaning while we are still corrupt.

But he just tied our state of becoming incorrupt to the event we call the rapture. Again –

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” 1 Corinthians 15:50-52

The meaning of Paul’s words is that all Christians, both alive and dead, are currently in a state of corruption. None have been made incorrupt yet. We still bear the effects of sin even though we are in Christ.

Until the rapture, which includes *both* the living and the dead in Christ, that will not change. Until then, Paul says, clearly and without any ambiguity, that in our corruption, when we die, we go to Hades, where Christ was. When the rapture occurs, our corruption will be replaced with incorruption. Hades will no longer have dominion over the dead.

While we are in Hades, we will (I’m speaking to believers here) be in Paradise – a really nice place to nap, be it two thousand years or 2 seconds.

The incorrectly translated words “to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord,” in 2 Corinthians 5 do not mean we go to heaven when we die. If they did, we would have a glaring and insurmountable contradiction in Paul’s letters.

We are the Lord’s. He has full control over us. This is a truth that exists even right now. We are present with the Lord. When we die, that state does not change. This is why Paul said, “Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

The Thessalonians, and indeed all believers who don’t understand these key points of doctrine, may feel that when the rapture occurs, those who had died are lost. Such is not the case.

Paul could not have even written the words of 1 Thessalonians 4 unless this was the issue at hand and which continues to be a misinterpreted issue to this day.

To review:

- 1) Paradise, as noted by Jesus in Luke 23, is not heaven. Jesus confirmed this when He said in John 20:17 that He had not ascended to the Father. That was after the resurrection. Paradise cannot be heaven. If Paradise was heaven, then there would be a contradiction in Jesus’ words.
- 2) Until we are glorified, we cannot enter heaven. Paul says we are corruptible and cannot inherit that which is incorruptible.

Here is the sequence –

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

-1 Corinthians 15:50-54

Only then...

⁵⁵ “O Death, where *is* your sting?
O Hades, where *is* your victory?” 1 Corinthians 15:55

- 3) The rapture deals with both the dead and the living as noted in 1 Thessalonians 4.
- 4) 2 Corinthians 5:6 does not mean that when we die, we will be physically present with the Lord in heaven. Despite misanalyses, usually based on faulty translations, that verse does not mean that there is an immediate transfer at death from this realm to heaven. That only occurs for living believers at the rapture.

Scripture reveals to us that those who have died have not gone to heaven. However, we are assured in 1 Thessalonians 4 that they are safely in the hands of the Lord. However, they are not yet – according to the clear and unambiguous timeline in 1 Corinthians 15 – glorified and in heaven.

That day lies ahead for them and for us. But God set it forth in this manner for His purposes. At some point, known to God alone, He will call forth His people from the grave and bring them, along with all of His living believers, to Himself.

The words are recorded, the event will come to pass, and we should not in any way worry that it might not happen just as He says. We are to be people of faith, living in faith until that day. This includes faith that God has securely kept those who have gone before us through the sad event of death and that they will be raised when we are translated.

God has assured us that it is so. Let us have faith in His promises. May it be so, to the glory of God who created us and redeemed us according to His tender mercies.

Closing Verse: *“...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3:10, 11*

A Few Additional Passages: After giving this sermon, two questions were asked concerning other verses that may point to a different conclusion. The first being–

“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

-Matthew 27:51-53

There is nothing beyond these verses to explain who these people were, how long they were dead, or what happened to them afterwards. Therefore, there really is nothing else to add to them but speculation. However, it doesn't say they went to heaven. It says they were raised, went into the holy city, and appeared to many.

As there is Lazarus as a precedent from John 11, the most likely explanation is that these were people who had believed Jesus was the Messiah and who had died recently. As it says that they went into the holy city, they could have come from all over Israel.

It is estimated that there were 500,000 to 600,000 people in Israel at Jesus' time. If the death rate was 4500 people per year, then 375 per month would die. If 5 percent of them believed Jesus was the Messiah and He raised them to substantiate this, that would be about 18 people. If 18 people were raised and came to Jerusalem, proving they had returned to life, like Lazarus did, it would be sufficient evidence to justify that Jesus truly was the Messiah.

After this, they could have lived out normal lives, like Lazarus, and died at whatever age the Lord determined.

The second set of verses which seem to point to going straight to heaven are from Psalm 68:18, and which is substantially repeated in Ephesians 4:8–

Therefore He says:

“When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men.”

The verse begins with “Therefore.” This is stated to explain the previous words, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.” In order to show this, Paul cites the substance of Psalm 68:18. He changes several words, and he goes from the 2nd person to the 3rd person. Thus, it is not a direct quote, but rather it conveys the substance of what was said and then he equates it to the triumph of the work of Christ –

“You have ascended on high,
You have led captivity captive;
You have received gifts among men,
Even *from* the rebellious,
That the Lord God might dwell *there*.” Psalm 68:18

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was the place where God met with man. Its placement in Zion was the sign of victory of God over His enemies. They were defeated, the land had been subdued, and God rested in His place. The thought of ascending on high is that of being exalted above all the others who have been placed in subjection to Him.

Though Zion was not the highest peak in elevation, it was considered the highest place of honor. Thus, any time that someone traveled to Jerusalem, regardless of direction or elevation from which they came, they were said to “go up” to Jerusalem.

As the Lord who dwelt between the cherubim of the ark had been brought to this place of exaltation, and as it was a sign that His enemies had been vanquished, it says, “You have led captivity captive.” This signifies that those who were once the captors (called the abstract “captivity”) had themselves been made captive. They were now the subdued prisoners who were conducted in bonds during the triumphal procession to that spot of exultation.

Quite often this verse is cited as a display of the prisoners being released from captivity by the work of Christ. Though this is something He did, it is not what is being referred to here. Rather, it is the foes of God being brought into captivity. After this defeating of His enemies, it then says, “You have received gifts among men.”

Ascribing this thought to the work of Christ, Paul modifies it and says, “And gave gifts to men.” This is the specific explanation of the previous verse which said, “...but to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” The spoils of war were handed out to the subjects of the kingdom according to the pleasure of the vanquishing ruler. Likewise, God passes out His gifts of victory according to His choosing as well.

Paul’s words, though modifying the psalm, do not change the intent. The two thoughts side by side say:

- And gave gifts to men (Paul)
- You have received gifts among men (Psalm)

The same idea is expressed. Christ received gifts which He then immediately turned around and handed out to His subjects. This follows from other times in Scripture where the same thought is denoted by a sudden and succinct expression. Scripture may say

something like, “Bring me a heifer,” which is simply a shortened form of “Bring a heifer to me for sacrifice.”

The analogy Paul is making is that Christ was victorious in His work. He was exalted to the highest position, there at the right hand of God, and from that position He gives the Holy Spirit to His subjects in the measure He so chooses. These two verses refer to just the opposite of what most people think.

This idea actually goes back to Deuteronomy 21:10. That was explained when I went through the Deuteronomy sermons –

10 (con’t) and you take them captive,

Again, it is third person, masculine, singular: *v’shavita shivyo* – “and you take captive his captivity.” It is a poetic way of saying that the entity which had its own victories and held its own captives has now become captive. David, probably thinking of this verse right now, penned this in Psalm 68 –

“You have ascended on high,
You have led captivity captive;
You have received gifts among men,
Even *from* the rebellious,
That the Lord God might dwell *there*.” Psalm 68:18

Paul then cites this verse from the psalms in Ephesians 4 –

“Therefore He says:
‘When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men’” Ephesians 4:8

Those who were once the captors (called the abstract “captivity”) had themselves been made captive. They were now the subdued prisoners who were conducted in bonds during the triumphal procession to the victor’s spot of exultation.

Quite often the words in Ephesians are incorrectly cited as a display of the prisoners being released from captivity by the work of Christ. Though this is something He did, it is not what is being referred to there. Rather, as can be seen from Moses’ words of Deuteronomy, it is the foes of God being brought into captivity.