
THE ETERNAL PURPOSE AND PLAN OF GOD

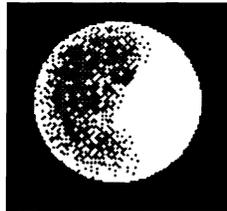
THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF LIFE



LARRY DEASON *with* BILL BEAN

DEDICATION

To
James E. Fisher
A
Long-Time Treasured Friend
In
Christ
Whose Loyalty And Generosity
Will
Always
Be
Remembered.



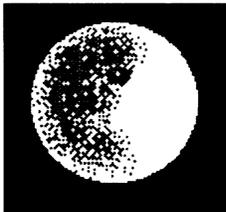
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fortunate is the person whose friends have a special interest in his work. I am indeed blessed to have had assistance from many in this work of faith and labor of love. A heart-felt thanks to Horace Smith who worked on the revision of the original text. To Sharon Robertson who assisted in the initial layout. To Susan Ziomek who helped in the proof-reading. To Keith Luker, who has spent endless hours in typesetting and layout. And to my faithful secretary, Norma West, who has, as in all my writings, spent countless days typing the manuscript.

But most of all to my Lord and God who has given me the opportunity to know His Son and the meaning and purpose of life.

Special Acknowledgement

To Bill Bean, who unhesitatingly agreed to write the essays associated with each of the study outlines. I owe Bill a special debt of gratitude. Bill had been a student of mine at Northeast School of Biblical Studies from 1975-77. At that time he studied the original *Eternal Purpose and Plan of God* which was used as a textbook in the school. Since that time Bill has taught these principles and lessons many times. Also, over the years, Bill has proven himself to be a very gifted writer. It is because of these qualifications and his desire to share in this labor of love that I am very pleased and grateful to have him co-write with me this revised version of *The Eternal Purpose and Plan of God: The Meaning and Purpose of Life*.



Larry Deason

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Larry Deason has been proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ for 40 years. He has served the Body of Christ as deacon, elder, preacher, missionary, counselor, teacher and writer.

Larry's seminars have been presented throughout the Northeastern United States, Texas, California, Hawaii, and Florida. He has also presented seminars in Australia, New Zealand, Tonga and the Fiji Islands.

While doing mission work in New Zealand Larry co-founded and taught for four years at the *Tauranga Two-Year Bible School*. He also co-founded and directed the *Northeast School of Biblical Studies* where he taught for 12 years. He also consulted in the establishing of the *South Pacific Bible College* in New Zealand. Larry has been a guest lecturer each year for the past 23 years at the South Pacific Bible College.

Larry Deason has written more than 20 booklets, books and in-depth study guides. These books have been distributed in all the states in the USA and in more than 70 nations worldwide including China, Eastern Europe, and Russia.

Larry and his wife Helen have been married for 50 years. They have two daughters, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Larry Deason continues to do mission work, present his seminars and distribute his books worldwide.

CONTENTS

PREFACE
INTRODUCTION

BOOK I **The Fall...The Conflict...The Mystery**

The Fall...

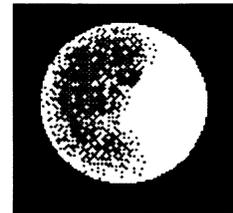
- 1 Redemption: The Central Theme of the Bible (3)
- 2 The Meaning of the Fall (15)
- 3 Satan Is Real Today (25)
- 4 All Sin Is Rebellion Against God (37)
- 5 The Fall and God (49)
- 6 The Fall and The Law of Sin and Death (61)

The Conflict...

- 7 God's Promise in Eden:
 The Seed of Satan Versus the Seed of Woman (75)
- 8 Conflict Throughout History (Part I) (87)
- 9 Conflict Throughout History (Part II) (101)
- 10 Conflict Throughout History (Part III) (115)

The Mystery...

- 11 The Eternal Purpose of God:
 The Mystery Revealed (Part I) (129)
- 12 The Eternal Purpose of God:
 The Mystery Revealed (Part II) (139)
- 13 A Review (153)



CONTENTS

BOOK II

The Creator...Man's Need...The Redeemer

The Creator...

- 14 God's Purpose and Mankind (171)
- 15 God's Creating of All Things (185)

Man's Need...

- 16 Man's Original Position and the Two Trees (197)
- 17 Man's Rebellion Against God (209)
- 18 Man's Need: Righteousness (225)
- 19 Man's Need: Propitiation (241)
- 20 Man's Need: Redemption (255)
- 21 Man's Need: Reconciliation (267)
- 22 Man's Need: Salvation (279)
- 23 Man's Need: Sanctification (291)
- 24 Man's Need: Glorification (303)

The Redeemer...

- 25 The Redeemer: Purposed and Promised (317)
- 26 The Redeemed: Purposed and Promised (333)

BOOK III

The Promise...

- 27 God's Promise to Abraham (351)
- 28 The Abrahamic Promise: The Nation-Land Aspect (365)
- 29 The Abrahamic Promise: The Covenant of Circumcision (383)
- 30 The Abrahamic Promise: The Nation-Land Aspect Fulfilled (397)
- 31 The Abrahamic Promise: The Covenant of Blessing and Cursing (411)

CONTENTS

- 32 The Abrahamic Promise: The Reception of the Promised Land (427)
 - 33 The Unfaithful Nation: Exile and Destruction (439)
 - 34 The Preservation and Restoration of the Remnant (455)
 - 35 The Abrahamic Promise: The Spiritual-Seed Aspect (Part I) (469)
 - 36 The Abrahamic Promise: The Spiritual-Seed Aspect (Part II) (483)
 - 37 The Abrahamic Promise: The Spiritual-Seed Aspect (Part III) (497)
 - 38 The Promise: Its Goal and Fulfillment in Christ (511)
 - 39 The Promise: The Basis of Our Hope (525)
-
- APPENDIX 1: Outline of the Course (537)
 - APPENDIX 2: The Seed Promise in the Old Testament (545)
 - APPENDIX 3: The Seed Promise in the New Testament (551)
 - APPENDIX 4: Witnesses and Inspired Testimony of the Promised Seed (567)
-
- BIBLIOGRAPHY (577)
 - NAME INDEX (583)
 - SUBJECT INDEX (585)
 - SCRIPTURE INDEX (591)

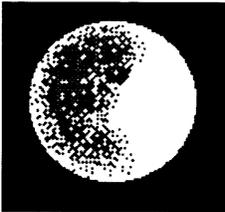
PREFACE

Life? What's it all about? Who can make any sense of it? Is there an answer to life? Is there any direction for living life with any real meaning and purpose?

These questions, and many others like them, are asked by every human being somewhere along the way: everyone searches for meaning, purpose, and direction.

The knowledge and understanding of *The Eternal Purpose and Plan of God* reveals the timeless answers to these ageless questions. Are you thinking, "Oh no, not another book about religion and theology"? I would like for you to think about this book as an opportunity to read and learn about life; its meaning, its purpose, and your reason for living—why you are here, where you are going, and what to do with your life in order to experience the greatest joy and satisfaction of your being...no matter what.

My desire and prayer is that the user of this volume will come to know Him who said, "I come that you may have life, and have it to the full." And through knowing Him, you will have the fullness of life that He gives:



Life that is timeless and ageless. Life that is meaningful and purposeful. Life that is absolute because it is connected to the Creator of us all and is determined by His own purpose and plan.

Come to know that life.

Receive it for your very own.

Enjoy it.

Forever.

Larry Deason

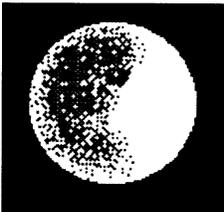
INTRODUCTION

The book that you are holding in your hands is a major revision of *The Eternal Purpose and Plan of God*, written some years ago by Larry Deason.

The Lord richly blessed those who studied the earlier work. I taught sections of it while an instructor at the Northeast School of Biblical Studies, and later adapted individual lessons for Bible classes and sermons.

We still do not have many study guides designed to take the student through the Bible from beginning to end, to aid him in his understanding of the eternal purpose of God in Jesus the Christ.

The earlier edition filled a great need, but *now* it has been greatly revised and redesigned to make the study even more profitable. Any individual Bible student would benefit greatly from studying this book, but it should also be noted that the new thirteen-week format would make it an appropriate study for use in Bible study groups and church Bible classes. Regardless of the way the book is studied, the results will be the same: growth in understanding of God's eternal purpose in Christ.



Each outline is prefaced by an essay, serving as an excellent introduction to the subject matter. It has occurred to me that the essays would provide the preacher with appropriate sermon material while the Bible classes study the book.

This study guide will open up for the student the meaning of redemption in Christ. It should be noted that the language of redemption used by the New Testament writers is found throughout the Old Testament.

INTRODUCTION

but especially in Genesis. In fact, if we were to make a list of all the words and themes in the New Testament that do not have their origin in the Old Testament, the list would be a very short one. It is difficult to imagine how anyone can understand the New Testament without a grasp of the studies that are found in this book.

I would commend this study book to individuals and to study groups:

- the format is attractive
- the essays are clear introductions to the study
- the study material is clearly outlined

In short, I am aware of no better study guide currently available on this subject. Be prepared to be delighted with the study. You are sure to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Horace Smith

Storrs, CT

January 10, 1989



THE ETERNAL
PURPOSE AND
PLAN OF
GOD

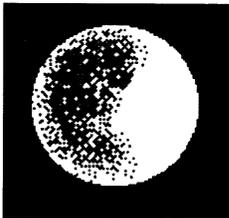
Book I

***The Fall...The Conflict
...The Mystery***

Larry Deason
with Bill Bean

1

**REDEMPTION:
*THE CENTRAL THEME
OF THE BIBLE***



*The course of human history
has never been left to chance,
to mindless evolution,
or to the presumptuous power
of humanistic technology
or philosophy—
its outcome was predetermined
before the beginning of time
by the One, True, Living
and Eternal God,
the Creator of our
being.*

1

REDEMPTION: THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE BIBLE



Although the Bible was written by men, it has always been the belief of the people of God that God Himself is the ultimate Author of this most remarkable book. This belief in both the human *and* divine natures of Scripture is based on the Bible's testimony concerning itself:

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, 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 arises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21).

The apostle Peter affirms two important points. First, he says that the testimony of the Old Testament prophets and that of apostles of Christ, such as himself, stand together in theological unity. There is continuity between the Old and New Testaments, even though Christ has removed the Old Covenant as a means of relationship with God. Second, he emphasizes that Scripture is every bit as much the Word of God as it is the words of men, for it does not originate in human minds, but in the mind of God.

Human prophets are the vehicles of supernatural revelation, but it is the divine origin of the Scriptures that guarantees their value and trustworthiness. Nor was this high view of Scripture a view peculiar to Peter; Paul is at least as

emphatic as Peter in declaring the unity and divine authority of Old and New Testament teaching. Furthermore, both apostles agree that the central message of both Old and New Testaments is redemption in Christ—a message that is whispered in the Old Testament's types, prophecies, history, and themes, but is shouted from the rooftops in the apostles' gospel proclamation:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures... (Rom. 1:1-2; compare Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:2-5; 2 Tm. 3:14-17).

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when

they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven... (1 Peter 1:10-12).

The Bible is not a book handed directly down out of heaven to a single man, as is claimed by Islam concerning the Koran, and by Mormons concerning their revelations. Neither is the Bible a hodgepodge collection of isolated, unrelated literatures, artificially packaged together to market a contrived religion. The glory of the Bible is that it is a unified book produced out of the mind of God, working with and through men of widely divergent times and backgrounds. It bears the marks of authentic humanity, reflecting diverse personalities and historical development.

Yet, it is unmistakably supernatural, being without error in all its intended teachings and affirmations. Its entire range of literatures and assortment of styles

speaking with one voice, testifying to the human race concerning truths that we must understand, and yet cannot discover unless God should reveal them.

For example, what is mankind? Who am I, as a human being? What is the meaning and purpose of life? Why do I have within myself the capacity to rise to almost supernatural levels of virtue and joy, and yet also the tendency to descend to nearly demonic depths of cruelty and evil? And where is history going? Does it, or anything within it, have any point at all— or is it, as someone has said, merely a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing? Does my life have any real purpose— or must I “write my own script” and hope it is sufficiently meaningful? And where does the Man Jesus of Nazareth fit into all of this? Was He really just a misguided megalomaniac, as *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, *The Passover Plot*, and

more recently *The Last Temptation of Christ* present Him— or is He the promised Messiah of Israel and risen Redeemer of the whole human race?

The Bible answers these questions in a way no serious seeker of truth can honestly ignore. The creation of man in the image of God, the temptation and Fall of mankind in Eden, the curse of sin and death, and the provision of redemption in Jesus Christ and His church are not offered as abstract doctrines to be debated, but as revealed answers to our deepest and most desperate human needs.

God is sovereign: He knows the end from before the beginning. That would be small comfort if God were not also love: He is not unconcerned about our miserable plight. In the following pages, we will examine in detail the eternally purposed redemption of the human race in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. We will see, close up, “God’s secret wisdom”—

...a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"... (1 Cor. 2:7-9).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. The Bible's theme, from beginning to end, is *redemption*.
- B. The eternal purpose and plan of God, as revealed in the Bible, is the redemption of sinful mankind.
- C. The entire course of human history follows a pattern which God has set: we come from God and we go to God.

Notes:

II. PREPARATORY READING

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in

Notes:

Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:3-14).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall show that redemption, the central theme of the Bible, is the unfolding of God's eternal purpose and plan.
- B. We shall see that God's plan is concerned with saving sinful, fallen, lost mankind through Jesus Christ, the only true Savior of the world.

IV. OUTLINE*Notes:*

A. "Redemption" is the outworking of God's plan throughout the course of human history.

1. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the historical, factual, redemptive act of God to provide salvation from sin for all mankind.

2. Therefore, man actually and historically fell away from God and stands in need of redemption (see Rom. 3:10-11; 3:23; 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22).

a. The Book of Genesis records that actual fall (read Gen. 3:1ff).

b. The rest of the Bible record is God's revelation of the outworking of His plan of redemption within the framework of human history (see Ps. 78:1ff; Acts 7:1-60; Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:1-3, 21).

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B. "Redemption" is the concern of God's plan in both Old and New Testaments.

1. The Old Testament presents

a. Man's sinless origin and beginning

b. Man's sinful fall and separation from God

c. Man's inability to save himself

d. Man's need for a sufficient Redeemer

2. The New Testament presents

a. God's provision for man's ultimate needs: salvation by redemption in Christ and His church (see Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians)

b. The Lord Jesus Christ, declared and proven to be the only begotten Son of God, as mankind's only sufficient Savior (read John 1:1-18; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:1-4)

3. The Old and New Covenants are inseparably linked in the historical unfolding of God's plan.
 - a. The central theme throughout the unity of the whole Bible maintains that redemption is an absolute necessity for lost humanity.
 - b. Therefore, the plan of God as revealed in biblical history is *religious* in nature: God is reconciling sinful mankind back to Himself.

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V. CONCLUSION

- A. God's plan of redemption was predetermined in eternity and providentially worked out in time.
 1. Redemption was predetermined "before the foundation of the world" (read Eph. 1-3; Col. 1:3-29).
 2. Redemption was providentially and successfully carried out unto "the fullness of the times" (see Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10; compare Rom. 15:4).

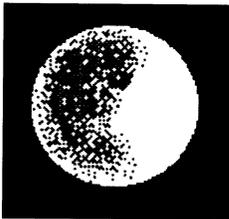
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B. The entire course of events in human history follows a pattern set by Almighty God: He rules in the affairs of men (see Dan. 2:21; Col. 1:16; Rev. 17:14).

1. The question, "What does the future hold?" is answered by Him who holds the future.
2. We come from God and we go to God: that is absolute (read Eccles. 12:7).
3. We may, through obedience of faith in Jesus Christ and to His gospel, return to God *redeemed* (read 2 Cor. 5:18-21; compare Col. 1:14)!

2

*THE MEANING OF
THE FALL*



*The fall of man
accounts for the presence
of evil and misery,
the universality of sin,
and the mystery of death
in a world once pronounced
“very good.”*

THE MEANING OF THE FALL



Except for the biblical teaching that mankind was uniquely created in the image of God, there is no concept more crucial to understanding the human race than the fact of the Fall. Man's nobility and cruelty, his genius and folly, his high hopes and dismal failures—all the ironies and paradoxes that characterize human history—can be understood only in relationship to the biblical doctrine of the Fall. The social, political, psychological, and ecological problems we face in today's world cannot be satisfactorily understood if the Bible's answer to the human dilemma is ignored. The root of our entire predicament, as individuals and as a species, is *spiritual*. Any proposal to remedy the human condition which bypasses the fact of mankind's fall

from fellowship with the Creator is mere whistling in the graveyard.

Consider mankind's perennial fascination with religion—all sorts of religion—even in nations where the official dogma is atheistic materialism. Generation after generation, multitudes bow themselves before lifeless idols; wars and persecutions flare up; masses groan beneath great burdens of religious guilt and legalistic requirements for salvation. Demon worship, Eastern mysticism, witchcraft, and other esoteric and occult practices are widespread. Depravity, deception, and enslavement are the general rule in human religion. Atheism goes in and out of style, but mankind remains incurably religious. Millions remain convinced that there really is a True Bread somewhere that can satisfy mankind's unrelenting

spiritual hunger—even if they themselves have never yet tasted it. Does this situation not clearly speak of Paradise lost—of a man and a woman tainted with evil, driven from the presence of God to wander the earth until the promised Seed should crush the Serpent's head and turn back the flaming sword at Eden's gate?

Sociologists tell us what we already know: The family unit is in serious peril; our cities have become concrete jungles where the strong prey upon the weak; racism is always boiling and churning, ready to violently erupt at any moment. Economists see the gap between the rich and poor as an ever-widening chasm that cannot be bridged by heartless capitalistic rationalizations of greed or worthless socialistic promises of dignity and equality. Political scientists tell us to brace ourselves for a head-on collision between East and West that could bring down

the whole of civilization. Could it all be related in some way to the blame-shifting and self-justification that spoiled the relationship of the man and his wife immediately following that first sin against God? Modern theories which locate the origin of war and other social problems in man's evolutionary development or economic inequality fail to ring true. We sense that the problem is within human nature because we find it within our individual selves:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? (James 4:1)

The inner battle of which James speaks is part of every person's experience. It takes many different forms, but the basic struggle seems to be the tension between what we believe we should be, and what we perceive ourselves to be in actuality.

Underlying our social problems is a basic *psychological* problem of self-acceptance: we tend to be discontented with who we are, what we do, how much we have. And at the root of this psychological problem is a *spiritual* one. It began with a man and a woman who had everything they needed, but who were lured by a Deceiver into grasping what was forbidden by their Creator. From that point on, human beings have tried everything from fig leaves to cocaine and alcohol to cover up their sense of guilt, insecurity, and inadequacy.

Besides simply accounting for the human condition, the Fall also offers insight into our problems. Man was created in the image of God to reign as God's regent over the rest of the created order:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over

the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen. 1:26-28).

Man's moral rebellion against God consisted in the First Pair's free choice to heed the Serpent's counsel. They would no longer trust God as their Source of life and Standard of morality. Instead, they would seize for themselves the place of God; they would be their own standard of right and wrong. By placing themselves in the position of God, Adam and Eve brought disruption and decay into the entire created order which God had placed under their stewardship:

To Adam he [God] said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen. 3:17-19).

Man's ecological crisis is a testimony to his rebellion against the Creator. Nature, once cooperative with man and harmonious within itself, now challenges man's authority. Even man's own natural body, taken from the elements of the earth, would die and return to dust. Humanity's God-given mandate to tame and control the natural environment is still in place; applied science and technology are legitimate human endeavors. But when man presumes autonomous

authority over himself and his environment, ecological imbalances and environmental problems are inevitable. God has authorized use and exploration, not abuse and exploitation, of the earth.

Far from being an irrelevant, archaic religious dogma, the biblical teaching concerning the historical Fall is an indispensable insight into the human dilemma and its remedy:

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8:20-21).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

- A. The Fall of man is an historical event which happened just as the Bible records it.

- B. The Fall was a selfish action which ended in man's rejection of God.

II. PREPARATORY READING

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked... (Gen. 3:1-7).

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Notes:

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will examine the narrative of the Fall from an historical perspective (read carefully Gen. 3:1-24).
- B. We will note what the Fall was, and what it was not (see Matt. 19:1-12; Luke 3:38; Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The Fall was not
 - 1. A subjective "feeling"
 - 2. An expressive "allegory or a figure"
 - 3. An evolutionary "slip in an upward involvement"
 - 4. An inevitable "circumstance of heredity or environment"
- B. The Fall was

1. A selfishness enacted against God
(see Gen. 3:1-8)

2. A sequence ending in rejection of God
(read 1 John 2:15-17; compare
James 1:12-15)
 - a. Eve's *lingering* conversation with
the Serpent started the process
(Gen. 3:1-3).

 - b. Eve *listened* to the Deceiver
(Gen. 3:2-3).

 - c. Eve *loosened* her hold on God
(Gen. 3:3).

 - d. Eve *looked* at the forbidden fruit
(Gen. 3:6).

 - e. Eve *longed* for the forbidden fruit
(Gen. 3:6).

 - f. Eve *lured* Adam to partake of it
(Gen. 3:6).

3. A sinful violation ending in
separation from God

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Notes:

- a. The will of God was *resisted*.
- b. The Word of God was *rejected*.
- c. The way of God was *refused*.

V. CONCLUSION

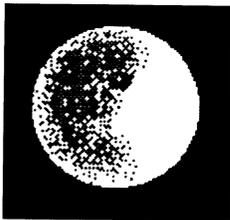
A. The historical Fall of man had certain implications (read 1 John 3:4; compare Rom. 5:14).

1. A *standard* is implied, for there can be no Fall without a criterion for life (read Rom. 3:23).
2. A *law* is implied, for there could not have been a Fall without an ordinance of restraint (read Rom. 5:13; 7:7-11).
3. A *regulation* is implied, for no Fall could take place without a model of conduct (read 1 Cor. 15:56).

B. Man's fall was brought about by his own *deliberate, selfish act!*

3

*SATAN IS REAL
TODAY*



*Satan appeals to
selfish pride and ambition
to decry God's justice,
to distrust God's truth,
to doubt God's mercy,
to deny God's righteousness,
and to dishonor
God's love.*



The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century eventually brought about a sense of human self-sufficiency that excluded any understanding of reality beyond the physical. Human reason, using the scientific method, professed the ability to discover all knowledge and answer all mysteries. Divine revelation was unnecessary. Resorting to metaphysical explanations was “unscientific”—the modern equivalent of “blasphemous.”

M. Scott Peck, M.D., has written a book provocatively entitled *The People of the Lie*. This title suggests some profound questions: Is there really such a thing as “truth”? What is the origin of deception? What is the ultimate truth (and the ultimate lie)? The Bible professes to answer these

questions—perhaps not in terms that modern men and women will feel comfortable with, but in a way that speaks clearly and powerfully to our real situation.

Most of us at times sense that the roots of evil must lie deeper than mere human factors can satisfactorily explain. The intricate, well-oiled machinery of maliciousness that systematically devours human lives and thrives on human misery must originate in depths beyond simple human egoism and moral depravity. When we consider the devastating effects of human self-centeredness in our world, we are confronted with the possibility that we are seeing only the dim reflection of a super-personal source of raw evil—just as, when the creative power of love is demonstrated, we sense that human actions and attitudes are

but transmitters of a higher Love that comes from above and beyond the human race.

Much human folklore and traditional mythology centers on the theme of an evil spell or enchantment that holds a certain person or kingdom in its grip—an enchantment of forgetfulness that causes its victims to lose all remembrance of who they really are, where they really came from, and why they were born. The spell is broken by a kiss from a prince, the completion of a quest, or the killing of a dragon. There is almost always a core of truth in these primitive legends. The Bible reveals that our world is under an exceedingly powerful enchantment: a spell of fear and deception cast by unseen, yet real, spiritual forces of wickedness in order to prevent man from recognizing and responding to his Creator:

*And even if our gospel is veiled,
it is veiled to those who are*

perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15).

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray... (Rev. 12:9).

The Father of Lies leads the world astray by exporting to mankind the same “wisdom” that has bound him and his minions in chains of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord: the

philosophy of autonomous, self-centered "freedom." The whole unbelieving world continues to believe "the big lie": You can be your own lord, your own god; the way to liberty is by answering to nobody but yourself. But God has revealed in the Bible that mankind has been created in a subservient position in the universe. We may choose to be Satan's pawns or God's sons and daughters, but we *will* serve ends beyond our own selfish concerns.

Don't be further deceived by ridiculous caricatures of cute little horned imps wearing red tights and carrying pitchforks: such infantile visualizations are among Satan's most effective propaganda techniques. You and I have a real enemy whose chief objective is to eternally seal our separation from our loving Creator. When the stakes are high enough and the warfare gets hot enough, he will forget his "public relations"

tactics, throw off his cartoon character disguise, and go right for our throats! He is as cold and calculating as a venomous snake; he has a network of evil that would make a syndicated crime organization look like a bunch of harmless pranksters by comparison! Apart from Jesus Christ, we would have every reason to anticipate an utterly hopeless future of meaningless misery, hatred, slavery, and death. We literally wouldn't have a prayer, were it not for Jesus of Nazareth, through whom we cry out to God, "Abba, Father!"

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world, and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions— it is by grace you have been saved (Eph. 2:1-5; compare Col. 2:13-15; Titus 3:3-7; 1 John 4:4).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS*Notes:*

- A. Satan's aim is to estrange man from his divine Maker (see Gen. 3:15; compare Matt. 12:26; Rev. 12:7ff).

- B. We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices: that is, his strategy and tricks (see 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3, 14-15; Eph. 6:11; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 5:19; compare Matt. 4:10; Luke 22:31; Rev. 12:9).

- C. Satan was active in the Fall and is just as active in human affairs today (see John 8:44; compare 1 Tim. 1:20; 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

II. PREPARATORY READING

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are:

Notes:

Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; neither is anyone who does not love his brother. This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous (1 John 3:7-12).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will display Satan's objective as it relates to man and his redemption.
- B. We will declare the Devil's methods and procedure for accomplishing his destructive aim.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Satan's mission: to estrange man from his Creator by
 - 1. Getting control of man's heart/mind (read Matt. 3:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12)
 - 2. Getting between man's spirit and his God

3. Gaining the place of the Most High
 4. Gaining man's trust and confidence for himself and away from God (read Luke 22:31)
 5. Gaining absolute mastery over those created in the image of God (read Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:7-10)
- B. Satan's method: to substitute his own lies in the place of God's truth.
1. Satan is a liar (read John 8:44).
 2. Satan seeks to falsify truth (read Gen. 3:1ff and compare Rev. 12:9-10).
- C. Satan's *modus operandi*: to introduce doubt into the mind (read Gen. 3:1-5).
1. He throws doubt on truth and sows distrust toward God (v. 1).
 - a. He challenges God's integrity.

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b. He suggests that God did not mean what He has said (see Gen. 2:16-17).

2. He selfishly substitutes his own word for God's (v. 4) (compare Matt. 13:24-29, 36-43; 2 Thess. 2:9-12).

3. He casts subtle reflections upon the goodness and perfections of God (v. 5).

a. He deceitfully suggests that God is withholding from man something needful and beneficial (see 1 Tim. 2:14).

b. He dangles the bait (see 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

D. Satan's missiles: he aims his attacks toward the whole person (read Gen. 3:6; also see Eph. 6:16 and compare Matt. 4:1-11; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 2:15-17).

1. He fires missiles to the physical senses (v. 6).

2. He fires missiles to desires and emotions (v. 6).

3. He fires missiles to the intellect (v. 6).

V. CONCLUSION

A. We need to learn from history (read Gen. 3:1ff; compare John 8:44).

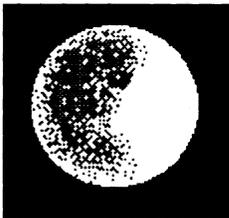
B. We need to be aware that Satan is real (1 Peter 5:8).

C. We need *not* be ignorant of Satan's devices: his strategy and tricks (read 2 Cor. 2:11).

Notes:

4

*ALL SIN IS REBELLION
AGAINST GOD*



*The rebellion of Adam
was a selfish act
(or choice)
against God
which resulted
in Man's fall
and death
(i.e., his separation
from his God).*

4

ALL SIN IS REBELLION AGAINST GOD



A child finds that popularity in his new school depends on one's willingness to use certain forbidden four-letter words. A young woman whose previous flaunting of "traditional morality" has resulted in an unwanted pregnancy must now decide whether she will allow her child to be born, or continue to follow the new morality to the end of the road. A middle-aged businessman receives an unsolicited inside tip from certain "higher-ups" to the effect that promotion in the company will necessitate certain moral and ethical compromises on his part.

These situations, so different from each other on the surface, share a certain human quality that characterizes many of our daily experiences. They are moral dilemmas—a type of problem you and I

face every day. This is a conceptual category absolutely foreign to any other species on earth. A gorilla may be taught to communicate in sign language, but it will never really understand the meaning of the word "ought." Moral accountability is reserved for that creature who was made in the Creator's image and likeness: man.

Machines can travel faster and work more efficiently than human beings. They are better at calculating and data processing than we are. Theoretically, machines could wipe mankind off the face of the earth with the simple push of a button. But it is the finger of man that pushes the buttons. Man realizes that he cannot allow his own future and that of the planet to be determined by statistical averages and tables of probability. There is a moral dimension to life, a

spiritual side of reality, that can be ignored or suppressed only to our own destruction.

Breakthroughs in biological science and psychological theory have shown us more of ourselves than we really wanted to see. In the words of secular humanist B.F. Skinner, humanity now sees itself as a species "beyond freedom and dignity." Once honored as only slightly lower than the angels, man is now seen as little more than a biological machine—a naked ape. Freud taught us that all of our complexities were really only "complexes": bad parental programming. Skinner and the chemical determinists confidently "debunked" the myth of man, the free moral agent. As a species and as individuals, we were entirely explainable in terms of genetic programming and environmental conditioning. Having only recently proclaimed the death of God, naturalistic science went on to announce the death of man.

It should not have been surprising to anyone when people began to act on the dehumanizing doctrines they had been hearing for two or three generations. If man no longer sees himself as uniquely created in the image of God and morally accountable to a Creator, there is no reason why he should go on living in accordance with obsolete ideas like "freedom," "dignity," "honor," "justice," and "truth." Many idealists imagined that some vague notion of human brotherhood might keep the social order intact for a few generations, until some basis of ethics could be found to replace the authority of God. And, as a matter of fact, for a little while most people simply overlooked the point that God and man were supposed to be dead, and went right on living as though the words "right" and "wrong" still had a real meaning. But when their children grew old enough to realize that the Emperor of Atheism wore no ethical

clothing, it was clear that time had run out. No ethical system, metaphysical mysticism, or political ideal had been found to replace God. People began to realize that each person was now responsible only to himself or herself.

It began to get scary. Human history was going nowhere, whether we blew ourselves up or lived healthy, prosperous lives. The entire history of the universe was an accident; how could an individual human life—or death—have any real meaning at all? Life or death, cruelty or kindness, honesty or deception, truth or lies, reality or fantasy—all were equally meaningless. There was no longer any boundary between what *could* be done, and what *should* be done—by an individual, a gang, or a nation. The new golden rule was: “Whoever has the gold, rules.” Might makes right. Do whatever you are smart enough and strong enough to get away with. And, by all means, “Have a nice day.”

Into this nightmare world, the biblical view of man as a unique, free moral being brings a welcome word of sanity and stability. But the Bible affirms not only the wonder of man created in the image of God; it also affirms the horrible disgrace of man as a moral rebel against his loving Creator. If we would retain human dignity, we must acknowledge human freedom and human guilt. The same is true on an individual level. Much of the unreality and meaninglessness that pervades our lives is due to a denial of truth at the core of our being. Personal confession of specific sins to God is the beginning of our journey back to humanness—and our ultimate salvation.

Whatever Became of Sin? asked a best-selling title written by psychiatrist Karl Menninger. Although himself not a Christian, Menninger recognized and lamented the loss of the biblical concept of true moral guilt. Simply denying

the existence of God and the validity of the human conscience will not make the ugly reality of sin go away; nor can we define sin out of existence by calling it an evolutionary aberration, an unfortunate side-effect of economic inequality, or a mental illness. Sin can be blotted out of existence only by the gracious, forgiving act of the One who is the Ultimate Victim of every cosmic crime:

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

The human sin problem began with a man, a garden of paradise, and a free decision for self-centeredness. Its solution involves a Man, a garden of agony, and a free decision for God-centeredness. Jesus made that decision for you and me. Will we make it for ourselves?



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. The student may refer to Book II, Lesson 14 of this series (*God, His Creating of All Things*) in connection with the present study.

- B. Man's original position enabled him to stand before God in innocence and holiness.

- C. The rebellion of man and its results are together designated as "the Fall": Man fell from his original relationship with God (carefully read Gen. 2-3).

II. PREPARATORY READING

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much

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more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:12-21).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will analyze the *attitude* of the first man, noting how it contributed to his fall.

B. We will trace the *action* that resulted from the first man's selfish disposition.

IV. OUTLINE

A. The factuality of man's rebellion and fall is *substantiated* (read Gen. 2-3).

1. The Fall is a fact of *historical* reality (see Rom. 5:12ff; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; 1 Cor. 15:20-22; Matt. 19:4).

2. The Fall is a fact of *scriptural* revelation (see Rom. 8:18-23).

3. The Fall is a fact of *experiential* relevance (see Rom. 3:10, 23; 7:7-11).

B. The cause of man's rebellious fall was *sin* (read Rom. 5:12ff).

1. Sin in essence is *selfishness* (see Gen. 3:1ff; compare Matt. 22:37-40; Luke 9:23; 14:25-33; Gal. 2:20).

2. Sin in example is

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- a. A *principle* of opposition to God (see Rom. 1:20-21; 2 Thess. 2:4)
- b. A *state* of unlikeness to God (see Matt. 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15; compare Gen. 1:27)
- c. An *act* of transgression of God's holy law (see Matt. 5:17ff; James 2:10; compare 1 John 3:4)

C. The attitude of man the sinner was *self-centered*.

1. Man removed God from His rightful place and enthroned "Self."
2. The result was
 - a. A *reproach* of God's love
 - b. A *rejection* of God's truth
 - c. A *rebellion* against God's authority
 - d. A *repugnance* towards God's majesty

D. The aftermath of man's sin was *significant* (read Gen. 3:1ff).

1. The *conscience* was affected (vv. 7-8).

a. They realized their "nakedness and shame."

b. They no longer retained a state of innocence.

2. The *understanding* was awakened (v. 8).

a. They experienced acute awareness of God's holiness and their own sinfulness.

b. They attempted to hide from God because their sin made them uncomfortable in His presence.

3. The opportunity for confession was allowed (vv. 9-13).

a. They were given fair and full opportunity to confess their crime to their Creator.

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b. Instead of confession (disclosure), they offered excuses (concealment): Adam blamed "the woman"; Eve blamed "the serpent."

4. The man's excuse furnished the basis for his condemnation (v. 17).

5. The condemnation for sin was administered (vv. 14-24).

V. CONCLUSION

A. Upon committing the sinful act, man discovered wrong within himself.

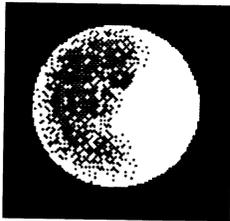
B. He attempted to provide a covering for himself which proved to be insufficient.

C. Fearing the holiness of God, man tried to hide from his Creator.

D. He made excuses for himself rather than confess his sinful disobedience.

5

THE FALL AND GOD



*Note that it was
neither Adam nor Eve
who came to God,
but it was God
who sought out
the man and woman
while they were
still in their sin.*



The modern philosophy called "existentialism," while completely wrong in its understanding of the cause of human misery, is nonetheless acutely perceptive in its observations of the human condition. The existentialists see humanity as a kind of misfit in the universe—a fish out of water. They see the universe as an impersonal, irrational environment that has somehow produced a creature that insists on being personal and rational. Man's sense of guilt, insecurity, and personal insignificance is thus interpreted as his necessary response to a universe that is absolutely indifferent toward him: "Man's problem isn't moral; it's metaphysical. He is too small to understand his own place in the universe—much less, God's." Obviously, such a diagnosis, while keenly aware of

the seriousness of the patient's illness, leaves him no basis of hope for recovery.

The unbelieving world has never offered a really respectable understanding of the human predicament. Pagan cultures, having refused to retain the knowledge of God that came to them from primeval divine revelations, in self-willed ignorance descended into demonic darkness. They hoped to appease hostile demigods by means of superstitious taboos and hideous ritual sacrifices. Elaborate systems of human wisdom and virtuous works were pieced together, some of them retaining more elements of the ancient light than others. These became known as the great world religions. All of them recognize the obvious: man has a problem. But these human religious systems all propose to solve that problem from

man's side: Do enough good works, accumulate sufficient positive karma, master enough of the ancient hidden knowledge, and man can thus save himself.

The Bible claims to be a revelation from God, providing the necessary answers so that man can properly understand himself, his problem, and his place in the universe. The Bible also claims to present a solution to the human dilemma that originates with God, not man. To the existentialists, the Bible replies that man's problem does not originate in his size, but in his sin. It is not that man is finite, but that he has deliberately become a fool:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.... Furthermore,

since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done (Rom. 1:21-23, 28).

The God of the Bible is not an indifferent cosmic force nor a hostile heathen deity. He combines within Himself both omnipotence and absolute holiness: almighty power and infinite virtue. This is the God who created man with a personal nature corresponding to His own, that man might enjoy a personal, intimate relationship with his Creator. Man's choice to reject that relationship is the true explanation of his problem. He is trying to cover his nakedness; he is hiding from his God. He feels shame and insecurity because he has left his proper place. He tries to hide among the animals and machines, refusing to admit that his sense of personal insignificance is not due to his nature, but because he has rejected the God whose image he bears within himself.

When I was a little boy, we played a game called "Hide And Seek." Whoever was chosen to be "it" had to cover his eyes and count while the other children would hide. When the counting finished the seeker would search to find each player. At the end of the game, if any hiders were still concealed, the seeker would call out, "One! Two! Three! Free!" This was the signal that everyone could come out of hiding without losing the game, because the game was over.

When God announced in Eden that a Seed of woman would come to "crush the head" of the Serpent (i.e., destroy his power of sin and death), the game was over. Adam and Eve had been hiding behind fig leaves and bushes while the God of all power and holiness had been calling them: "Where are you?" It is, of course, futile to flee from the presence of God, but we shouldn't be too tough on Adam and Eve. Haven't we all spent a

good deal of our lives hiding in the shadows of fear and guilt, covering ourselves with rationalizations and excuses, delaying the inevitable confrontation with reality and truth—*Ultimate Reality and Truth?* But the game is over. The Good News of redemption from sin in Christ Jesus is God's call of "One, two, three—free!" to each one of us personally. We can come out of hiding without fear of "losing the game." We can get "out free" because an infinite price has been paid— not by man, but by God.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).



Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. Not only were Adam, Eve, and Satan involved in transgression, but God also was affected by the temptation and fall of mankind (read Gen. 3:1-24).

- B. The concern and action of God in relation to this great catastrophe is vitally linked with His eternal purpose of redemption.

II. PREPARATORY READING

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in

these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God (1 Peter 1:13-21).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will consider God's active concern for fallen mankind.
- B. We will consider God's attitude toward sin.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. God seeks fallen man: "Where are you?" (read Gen. 3:9).
 - 1. Here is God's call of *justice*: The Holy One cannot overlook sin.
 - 2. Here is God's call of *mercy*: God is concerned about the state of the sinner.
 - 3. Here is God's call of *love*: God compassionately takes the initiative in

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offering redemption to His “enemies” (see Rom. 3:9-11; 5:6-8; compare James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

B. God immediately promises redemption (read Gen. 3:15).

1. *Immediately*, before acting in judgment, He displayed mercy.
2. *Immediately*, before expelling them from the garden, He declared a promise and a hope for mankind.

C. God promises redemption through the “seed” (offspring) of woman (see Gen. 3:15).

1. By woman came sin; by woman the Savior would come into the world (see 1 Tim. 2:14; Gal. 4:4; compare Matt. 1:1ff).
2. By woman came the curse; by woman would come the Curse Remover (see Gal. 3:13-14; compare 1 Tim. 2:15).

3. By woman came the loss of Paradise (i.e., the Garden of Eden); by woman would come the means of restoration to Paradise (see Luke 23:43; compare Rev. 22:1-5).

D. God provides (in type) a substitutionary sacrifice for sin (read Gen. 3:21).

1. Recall the death penalty connected with disobedience (see Gen. 2:17).

2. The pardoning provision is accomplished by *blood*— not leaves (see Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:22).

a. Innocent animals (represented by the coverings of *skins*) became a substitute for the guilty— dying in their stead.

b. *Mercy* desired to spare the offenders; *justice* demanded punishment for sin; *love* provided the way (note Heb. 9:11ff; compare Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Peter 1:17-21).

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3. The propitiatory provision was made by God Himself (see 2 Cor. 5:21; compare Luke 15:22ff; Isa. 61:10).

a. *God* furnished skins.

b. *God* made the covering.

c. *God* clothed Adam and Eve.

E. God removes the man and woman from the garden (read Gen. 3:24).

1. God and man went separate ways.

a. The original fellowship between God and the man was severed.

b. Sin always causes division (note Isa. 59:1-2).

2. Without a means of forgiveness, man is "separated from the life of God" (see Eph. 4:18; Luke 15:32; compare Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:6).

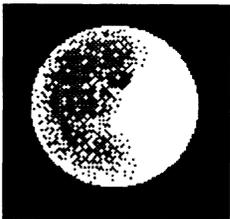
V. CONCLUSION

- A. God is wholly righteous and just— *and punishes sin.*
- B. God is entirely merciful and loving— *and provides a “covering” for sin.*
- C. God is totally concerned with man’s deliverance from sin— *and proves His love by providing salvation.*
- D. God completely solves the human sin problem by His eternal purpose of redemption in His Son— *the Savior of the world.*

Notes:

6

*THE FALL AND THE LAW
OF SIN AND DEATH*



*Eternal life
is the consequence
of redemption
– a sharing in the life
of God Himself!*

6

THE FALL AND THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH



To be human is to be in need. We are goal-oriented beings, motivated to satisfy our appetites—however ambiguous or indefinite they might be. We feel physical hunger, and are glad that there exists a commodity called “food.” We become tired, and are gratified (whether we consciously acknowledge it or not) that there is such a thing as “sleep.” But buried within our human nature, deeper inside some of us than others, we sense a gnawing need that no earthly commodity or physical function seems adequate to fulfill.

Sometimes, that hunger attacks us with such intensity that we feel frightened. Or it may strike us in such a way as to arouse our anger. It drives us on, day after day, like desert vagabonds who dare not succumb to weariness lest they

die of thirst while they sleep. We have seen those who yield to their weariness. Something has died inside them: their very humanity.

Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychotherapy, provided a theory of human nature which is still popularly accepted. He began with the presupposition that man is entirely a biological animal, randomly brought forth by the irrational, impersonal processes of naturalistic evolution. Man is self-centered, said Freud, because of his animalistic instinct for survival and need-gratification. Thus, Freud saw self-centeredness as the normal condition of man, implicit in his very nature as man. For Freud, human selfishness was just another manifestation of the law of the jungle, having no greater moral implications than are involved in dogs fighting over a bone or bucks

locking horns over a doe. Morality is an irrelevant illusion, a tribal taboo, a superstitious bugaboo.

Next, Freud proceeded to illuminate the “true” motivating forces behind all human moral pretenses: “the drive toward sensual pleasure (*eros*) and the drive toward power and destruction (*thanatos*).”¹ All human behavior could be explained by the instinctive, animalistic drive toward pleasure and power—ultimately, in the forms of sex and death. According to Freud, the frustration of these needs results in neuroses and antisocial behavior. The solution he proposed was a frank acceptance of our self-centered nature, an unmasking of subconscious selfish desire, and the pursuit of selfish gratification in socially acceptable ways.

Freud’s analysis of the human condition contains some valuable insights. Man is self-centered. We *do* seek satisfaction of deep, hidden needs. There is much about

ourselves that lies hidden beneath conscious recognition. But we must be suspicious of any view of man that omits or negates the factor of morality, a basic experience in everyone’s daily reality. Freud’s amoral approach looks like another fig leaf: another attempt to cover up man’s sense of inadequacy and guilt without ever coming out of the bushes to face God.

According to the Bible, man is self-serving because of the Fall and its results—not because of his inherent nature. Our true needs are not *power* and *pleasure*; these are but poor secular substitutes for *significance* and *security*. Our first parents, created in total innocence and perfection, enjoyed an immediate sense of the presence of God. From their relationship with God, Adam and Eve derived complete fulfillment of their personal human needs: meaning and purpose; security and stability. Their moral separation from God brought into

the human condition that sense of emptiness and need which each of us experiences as we reach an age of moral accountability. Invariably, we seek to fill that emptiness in self-centered, worldly, and sinful ways. As we grow to an age of knowing to choose good and refuse evil, we experience spiritual hunger for what God alone can give, but find ourselves surrounded by forbidden fruit on every side. Thus, each one of us repeats the Fall in personal experience, and the reign of sin and death claims us, one by one:

For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.... For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death (Rom. 7:7-9, 11).

Our physical mortality, inherited from the Fall, urges us to grab for all this world's gusto *now*, while we have the chance (1 Cor. 15:32). But through this desperate, self-assertive pursuit of "life," we sin and thus incur spiritual death. That is how the Devil makes us slaves of sin through our fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15).

Only by restoring man's original relationship with God can the cycle of sin and death be broken. Only by filling our spiritual void with a sharing in God's own life can we be made whole again. However wretched we may be apart from God, we can give joyous thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord:

...because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be

fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:2-4).



¹Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1975), p. 27.

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. By Adam's one act of transgression sin made its entrance into the world (read Gen. 3:17ff; compare Rom. 5:12ff).

1. *The man* caused the ground to be cursed.
2. *The man* would eat bread in sorrow.
3. *The man* would have to contend with thorns and thistles.
4. *The man* would continue his existence by sweat (hard toil).
5. *The man's* body would return to dust.
6. *The man* is barred from the Tree of Life by a sword.
7. *The man* died "*that day*"; he was immediately separated from God because of disobedience (penalty of *death for sin*).

Notes:

Notes:

B. Through Adam and Eve entered a law (principle) that is effective still: *the law of sin and death* (read Rom. 5:12; compare Rom. 8:1-3).

II. PREPARATORY READING

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate

I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do— this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God— through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin (Rom. 7:7-25).

Notes:

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will define and describe the *law of sin and death*.

- B. We will demonstrate that freedom from this law (and its effect) is realized in Christ Jesus.

Notes:

IV. OUTLINE

A. This law is stated simply.

1. "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezek. 18:20).
2. "...for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:17; compare 3:24).
 - a. Adam did not die *physically* on the "day" he ate the forbidden fruit.
 - b. Adam died *spiritually* on that same "day."

B. The law of sin and death has many serious implications.

1. Spiritual death is defined as "the separation of man from God"—the divine Source of Life (W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. 1, p. 276).

- a. Death is separation from God:
Because of sin, God will not do what He could do (see Isa. 59:1-2).

- b. Death is separation from eternal life: severance from the life of God (see Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-20; compare John 3:16; 11:25; 14:6; 17:3, 5, 24; 1 John 1:1-4; 5:13; 2 Tim. 1:10).

- c. Death is separation from fellowship with God: ceasing to participate in the life of God (see 1 John 1:5-10; compare John 17:3; Rom. 7:7-11; Heb. 6:4-6; 1 John 5:16-17; contrast Eph. 5:11).

- . The law of sin and death is defused by a higher law.

- a. The "law of the spirit of life" in Christ Jesus frees one from the "law of sin and death" (see Rom. 8:1-3).

Notes:

Notes:

b. The “law of Moses” was neither humanly able nor divinely intended to free anyone from sin and death (see Lev. 18:5; compare Rom. 3:19-21; 5:20-21; 7:10, 14, 22-24; Gal. 2:16-21; 3:12ff; Heb. 7:18-19; 8:7-9:17).

V. CONCLUSION

A. In summary, death

1. Is separation from God
2. Is severance from eternal life
3. Is alienation from fellowship with God
4. Entered into the world through sin
5. Came to all men— for all sinned

B. We conclude that

1. The law (or principle) of sin and death is operative in the world

2. Sin and death are destructive enemies of mankind

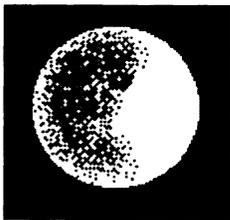
3. All are bound captive by the law of sin and death until Jesus Christ sets them free by the power of the gospel (read carefully John 8:21, 24; Rom. 7:24-8:4; compare Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4)

4. The “law of the spirit of life” in Christ Jesus frees one from “the law of sin and death” (read carefully Rom. 8:1-3; compare John 8:34-36)

Notes:

7

***GOD'S PROMISE IN EDEN:
THE SEED OF SATAN
VERSUS THE SEED OF WOMAN***



*The seed of woman
is victorious and triumphant.
Satan's head is crushed
by Jesus' heel at Calvary.
He arose!
God's eternal purpose
and its historical unfolding
have not been frustrated.*

7

GOD'S PROMISE IN EDEN: THE SEED OF SATAN VERSUS THE SEED OF WOMAN



The cosmic struggle between good and evil has fascinated the human race since time immemorial. We sense that we are more than innocent bystanders in the conflict; yet, it is obvious that we are not really the main contestants.

Various forms of religious dualism have tried to explain the conflict in terms of two equally eternal principles: one good, the other evil. But if both are equally eternal, then either might justly claim our moral allegiance as "God." Cruelty would then be as acceptable as kindness, hatred as honorable as love, and fraudulence as legitimate as honesty. Nobody consistently lives as though good and evil were equally valid moral options. Certain philosophers and scientists have *proposed* this complete

undermining of morality, but none of them *lives* consistently in accordance with it. Even the most morally depraved individuals and cultures of the human species acknowledge certain moral standards and values, however primitive or perverse they might be. Evil is not the eternal, original Reality.

The moral ideals of most human cultures have centered around the idea that self-centered behavior is wrong. The limits of benevolence vary widely from culture to culture, but all seem to agree that the absolute claims and desires of "self" must be subjected to those of one's family, tribe, nation, fellow man, and/or deity. Thus, while the most ethically advanced societies teach the brotherhood of all mankind and promote goodwill toward all, the "backward" tribes

advocate love toward one's immediate kinsmen only. The point is, none of them admire or condone a policy of absolute selfishness. So, at the bottom line, the spiritual conflict is a contest between pure love and absolute self-centeredness.

According to the Bible, mankind was originally created in the image of an all-loving God. The very existence of the universe, of Adam and Eve, and of the abundant provisions of Paradise all speak of the benevolent and gracious character of God. He created freely—not out of compulsion. He provided abundantly—not meagerly. He allowed maximum freedom and forbade only one indulgence. One prohibition was necessary for the moral test of man: would he center his existence on God, or on himself?

Enter, the Serpent. Where he came from, we are not immediately told. But what he embodies is clear from the moment of his appearance:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made [he is a creature, but not one of mere animal intelligence]. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" [he challenges the authority of the Word of God]. The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman [the Serpent is the enemy of God, of man, and of truth]. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" [the Serpent embodies the moral principle of egocentricity: unrestrained self-centeredness, self-assertiveness, self-reliance, and self-determination] (Gen. 3:1-5).

Ultimately, there are only two moral principles at work in the universe, between which each of us must choose: love (the original and eternal Reality) and egocentricity

(the worship of the created self rather than the Creator).

Because the Bible is a unified divine revelation composed of various inspired literatures, we are not surprised that information which is withheld at an earlier stage is revealed in later biblical history. The identity of the Serpent is an example of such progressive revelation; it is not until John pens the final book of canonical Scripture that the Serpent is completely unmasked. He is neither a beast of the field, nor a man (though he has exploited both forms to serve his own ends). He is

...that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray (Rev. 12:9).

This spiritual entity is the source of sin, the fount of all egocentricity. He invented the philosophy of self-centeredness by perverting his own free will in an incident that preceded human history (read

2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Through use of the serpent, Satan managed to export this philosophy and its inevitable results (deception, sin, and death) to the human race, spoiling the entire creation under man's stewardship. This is the biblical explanation of why man finds, within himself and his world, a mingling of elements from both heaven and hell. This is why everything that was once pronounced "very good" without any qualification can now attain only to the level of a mixed blessing. The garden of man's nature, culture, environment, and history is now strewn with weeds planted by an unseen enemy.

Not only did God foreknow the entire gamut of human history, including the Fall; He had already formulated a plan to checkmate Satan's deadly strategy before the game pieces were on the board. Immediately after the Devil's opening move, God announced to Satan that the cosmic contest was far from

being finished—indeed, it had barely begun! Satan might control the majority of mankind through the power of deception, sin, and death, but God would eventually bring about victory for the human race through a promised Deliverer (Gen. 3:15). This Savior would be born of woman—a vindication of womanly nature as a work of God which Satan had exploited to introduce sin into the world. This promised Seed of woman would redeem mankind from sin and death by refusing the philosophy of self-centeredness. Rather than grasping at the forbidden fruit of self-worship, the Son of God would let go His rightful divine prerogatives and be

...born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons (Gal. 4:4-5).

Jesus' submission to God, even to the point of death on a cross, was the means by which He

was perfected as a redeeming sacrifice for human sin. God raised from death the human nature of Christ, sealing the union of human and divine natures forever in His Son. Thus, the death of Christ was simultaneously the "bruising" of the Seed of woman, and the "crushing" of the Serpent's head. Now, any among the children of Adam and Eve who so desired could forsake the way of sin and death by freely choosing to live in union with the risen Christ by faith. Satan's reign of terror over mankind is broken.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. At the time Adam and Eve fell, God made a promise and a prediction.
- B. He predicted that there would be a conflict between Satan's seed and Eve's seed. He promised victory for the woman's seed.
- C. In this lesson we shall analyze the announcement of the conflict in Genesis 3:15.

Notes:

II. PREPARATORY READING

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I

Notes:

ate." So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them (Gen. 3:8-21).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

A. We will give an in-depth exposition of the announcement of the conflict (read Gen. 3:15).

B. We will come to clearly understand the relationship of the announcement of conflict with the unfolding of history.

Notes:

IV. OUTLINE

A. Key terms that must be defined include

1. Enmity: *"ill will, hatred, strife"*
 - a. This implies bitter opposition: warfare!
 - b. This enmity (or warfare) is between the woman and Satan: her seed and his seed.
2. Seed (ASV): *"ancestors, posterity, offspring"*
 - a. There is the Serpent's offspring.
 - b. There is the woman's offspring (read 1 John 3:6-12).
3. Bruise (ASV): *"to crush, to trample down"*

Notes:

- a. This implies “lying in wait and watching” in order to attack and assault: guerrilla warfare!
 - b. The word denotes harm and hurt: defeat and destruction.
4. Head: *“the superior position; signifying the object of power, control and authority”* (see Matt. 28:18; compare Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22)
- a. Satan’s “head” (i.e., his power or authority) was to be crushed and destroyed.
 - b. Satan’s power is identified as sin and death (read Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; compare 1 Cor. 15:56; Rom. 8:1-4).
 - c. The blow on the “head” denotes a permanent, fatal wound.
5. Heel: *“the lesser portion; that which is instrumental in crushing the head”*

a. The original language is "*his heel*," not "*its heel*"— expressing the cost of humanity's redemption (read Acts 3:18; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47).

b. The "heel" is to be bruised by destroying the head of the Serpent: a "*bruised heel*" is far less damaging than a "*bruised head*"! (Read Heb. 2:14-16; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 1:17-18; compare 2 Tim. 1:10.)

B. Two great truths can be deduced from God's words to the Serpent:

1. There would be a "life and death" struggle between *the seed of Satan* and the *seed of woman* (see Rev. 12:1ff).

2. The seed of the woman would ultimately be victorious (see Col. 2:13-15; compare Gal. 4:4-6).

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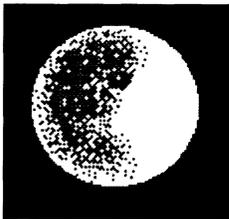
Notes:

V. CONCLUSION

- A. The meaningful message of God's announcement of conflict: *God promises redemption* (read Gen. 3:15).
- B. This redemption will be costly: *a bitter, bloody conflict is predicted by God Himself.*
- C. The revelation of God's Word, from this point on, concerns the historical unfolding and fulfillment of this promise made in Eden.

8

*CONFLICT THROUGHOUT
HISTORY (Part I)*



*What God has promised
He is able to perform.
His eternal purpose
will not be defeated—
even by a barren womb;
Sarah bears Isaac—
the “seed of woman”
continues.*

8

CONFLICT THROUGHOUT HISTORY (Part I)



The history of the human race is a history of conflict. It has been calculated that

...For the past 5,500 years, the world has known only some 300 years of peace. Since 3,600 B.C., there have been more than 14,000 large and small wars in which 3.5 billion people have been killed. There have been more than 1,600 arms races since 650 B.C., with one nation attempting to make bigger and more destructive weapons than everyone else. Only 100 of the spiraling arms buildups has not culminated in war.¹

Obviously, conflict plays a major role in the human drama. What other species expends as

much time and energy on its own destruction as does man? There is more "peaceful coexistence" among even the natural enemies of the animal kingdom than there is within the family of man. A mongoose will kill a snake for food, but it does not hate snakes. A lioness has no interest in tearing up a zebra, except to feed herself and her cubs. But man will destroy his own kind out of sheer hatred.

Man's rationalizations of his murderous tendencies are varied and contradictory: "He is black"; "She is white"; "They are foreigners"; "We are native sons." Racism, nationalism, bigotry, and chauvinism are all expressions of human hatred. Enmity need not always express itself as open hostility; war can be "cold" as well as "hot."

What is the essence of human hostility, the core of human

conflict? Is it economic class, as Marx concluded? Is it racial, as the Nazis claimed? Perhaps the source of the struggle is a matter of political ideology? Certainly, religion has played a part in the story of human conflict. It is not always easy to distinguish between symptom and sickness, supply and source, effect and cause. Careful observation is crucial if we are to avoid a superficial understanding of human conflict.

One of the most effective strategies of warfare known to mankind is a tactic called "divide and conquer." The idea is to weaken the enemy by creating dissension within his ranks, thus destroying the unity of his forces. Children often use this tactic to weaken the unity of parental authority in the home. Soon, mom and dad are forgetting that they are one flesh, with one purpose. While they fight between themselves for authority, the manipulative youngster has his own

way. (Of course, a high price must eventually be exacted from the child, his parents, and society at large; when the child "wins," everybody loses—including the budding little Machiavelli.)

So it goes within the family of man: since the Fall, we have seen humanity divided and at war with itself. Oppression, persecution, and genocide fill page after page of our family history. In not-so-quiet desperation, man collectively holds a nuclear arsenal against his temple and threatens to blow himself away. It seems we are our own worst enemy—but there is another. He sits on the sidelines, calling the plays, laughing at us as we kill each other for fun and profit. He stirs up men against women, and women against men; he sows strife and contention among nations and between generations. Above all, he convinces us to equate our personal desires, opinions, and convictions with Absolute Truth, so that we feel no guilt or

shame when we destroy those who differ with us. "Divide and conquer" is his strategy: Satan reaps a human harvest of death and damnation, using slave labor to gather it in.

Spiritual forces of wickedness exist. They oppose God by destroying His good work; they particularly delight in defacing the divine image stamped upon each man and woman, every boy and girl. Exploiting us by the attraction of the lie, the desires of the flesh, and our fear of death, the unseen enemy begins to brainwash us before we know what is happening. As we brutalize and dehumanize one another, we ourselves become dehumanized. Satan adds us to his collection of mindless puppets: identically propagandized zombies who think they are free. Satan has no legitimate children. They are all stolen from God, all seduced by a Stranger who promised them candy and then took them for a long ride

to nowhere! That is why the Bible can in one breath tell us to hate the sin, but love the sinner. Beneath the Satanic brand mark, the Devil's children still bear the divine image. We must have compassion for our own kind.

The present fractured state of humanity could be remedied if we would all understand what Paul the apostle taught the Athenians:

"From one man he [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth.... As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'" (Acts 17:26, 28).

The Good News about Jesus Christ is God's summons to all the children of Adam and Eve who have foolishly chosen to follow the lies of Satan, the lusts of the flesh, and the lure of this fallen world:

"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and

you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

In reply to the question posed by Charles Hodge in his book *Will God Run?*, Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son assures us that God will run to receive back His wayward sons and daughters. Though they have renounced their true heritage, squandered their inheritance, and brought reproach upon the Name that founded the whole human race, the arms of God are opened at Calvary's cross to embrace each repentant son and daughter.

In Christ, God has planned and prepared a family reunion for mankind. The enemy is not our fellow man, as cruel as he might seem to be. The enemy is certainly not God; He has not spared even His only begotten Son in His efforts to win us back to Himself. We are being distracted from fighting against our true enemy by a

devious strategy of "divide and conquer." We are so busy fighting against one another that we fail to recognize our common enemy:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:12).



¹Allen Isbell, *War and Conscience* (Abilene, TX: Biblical Research Press, 1966), p. viii.

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Notes:

A. The conflict between the “seed of woman” and “the seed of Satan” is a struggle that begins with the early history of the human race.

B. We see the conflict between

1. Cain and Abel

2. The daughters of men and the sons of God

3. A barren womb and an abundant promise

4. A famine and a family

II. PREPARATORY READING

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.” Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.

Notes:

The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. Today, you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.... Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD (Gen. 4:1-15, 25-26).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will become aware of the viciousness of Satan and his intent to destroy the "seed of woman."
- B. We will see that there is a greater power than that of Satan, and that God's purposes will be providentially carried out.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Satan's vicious attack upon the woman and her seed is immediate.
 - 1. *His aim* is the destruction of the promised "seed."
 - 2. *His method* is murder.
- B. *Cain and Abel*: The spiritual conflict commences (read Gen. 4:1-8, 25).
 - 1. Satan, "a murderer from the beginning," slays Abel through Cain (see John 8:44; compare 1 John 3:8, 10, 12).

Notes:

Notes:

2. This act destroys the “righteous Abel,” and Satan is seemingly victorious.

3. *But God* appointed “another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him”: Seth, whose name appears in the lineage of Christ (see Luke 3:38; compare Heb. 12:24).

C. *Daughters of men and sons of God:* The spiritual conflict continues (read Gen. 6:1-14).

1. Human wickedness has greatly intensified due to intermarriage between the “sons of God” (i.e., those “of faith”) and the “daughters of men” (i.e., those “not of faith”): God determines to destroy all living things upon the earth.

2. A universal flood comes upon the earth: “Every living thing that moved on the earth perished” (see Gen. 7:21-23).

3. *"But God remembered Noah...."* (compare Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27; Heb. 11:7; 1 Peter 3:18-22; 2 Peter 2:5).

D. *A barren womb and an abundant promise:* The seed-promise advances (read Gen. 17:15-19).

1. The promise to Abraham had been given twenty-four years before (see Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1ff).
2. God reaffirms this promise, assuring Sarah that she will bear a son, Isaac, even though "...Sarah was past the age of childbearing": She was barren (see Gen. 18:11; compare Rom. 4:18-21; 9:7; Heb. 11:11-12).
3. *"But God!..."*: Isaac is born according to God's announced schedule.
 - a. *"Then God said..."* (read Gen. 17:19).
 - b. *"And the LORD did..."* (read Gen. 21:1-3).

Notes:

Notes:

E. *A famine and a family*: The seed promise is endangered (read Gen. 41:55-47:1).

1. Jacob (i.e., Israel) and his family were facing starvation (see Gen. 42:1-2; compare Gen. 43:8).

2. Jacob (via his son, Judah) is the connecting link for the fulfillment of “the promise” (see Matt. 1:2; compare Luke 3:33-34; Heb. 7:14).

a. The death of this one family would mean victory for Satan.

b. However, they are providentially preserved by God’s power and purpose.

3. *But*— “The LORD was with Joseph...”

a. Review the narrative concerning Joseph and his brothers, noting God’s providence (read Gen. 37:1-36; 39:1-50:26).

- b. By the hand of Joseph (due to God's providence), the promised seed lineage through Judah is sustained (read carefully Gen. 50:15-21).

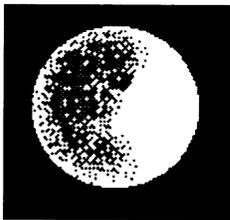
V. CONCLUSION

- A. Each time, seemingly against all odds, the promised seed of woman comes through the struggle against the forces of Satan.
- B. The drama of human redemption continues as God's eternally purposed plan unfolds through the divinely inspired biblical record.

Notes:

9

*CONFLICT THROUGHOUT
HISTORY (Part II)*



*The lineage through whom
the Messiah would come
is not annihilated due to the
oppression of a heathen nation;
God will deliver.
God will keep his promise.
Satan and his seed
do not win this battle,
nor will they win this war.
The "seed of woman"
will continue.*

9

CONFLICT THROUGHOUT HISTORY (Part II)



There is a line in one of the hymns that brilliantly captures the essence of the biblical view

of history:

*Although the wrong seems oft
so strong, God is the ruler yet.*

The LORD reigns; God alone is ultimately king. This theme is the truth that underlies the biblical presentation of the outworking of God's eternal purpose and plan of redemption. Sin and death have wrought havoc in all that the Creator has made. Yet, through His sovereign power and invincible wisdom, He will make all things new again, and all that once was decreed "very good" shall be even better. Limited human understanding may doubt or even deny the wisdom of God, but

"...who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" (1 Cor. 2:16; compare Isaiah 40:13).

If God thinks it more glorious to redeem a fallen world by suffering than to create a universe in which neither love nor hate were possible, who can argue the point? Although we might believe that the smooth operation of machinery is superior to the problematic fickleness of free moral agencies, we are in no position to debate with the Creator. He made a universe in which the unprogrammed choices of men and women would be a meaningful factor in the course of history—not only human history, but the history of the entire creation under man's stewardship. For although the Divine Author has sovereignly predetermined the plot of the cosmic drama, and has written several key episodes into the

script to ensure its outcome (including a Personal appearance in first century Palestine, and one in the final scene of the last act), He has also left it for us, the human cast, to write for ourselves whatever roles we may choose.

Of course, we have limitations in our freedom to choose: the Fall of man imposes certain restrictions, as do God's laws of nature. But neither the disobedience of humanity nor the norms of nature are sovereign; God has used them both—and overruled them, when necessary—in accomplishing His immutable purpose. And it is this eternal purpose of God, now clearly revealed and accessible to mankind, which each of us must choose to either accept or reject as we write the history of our daily lives.

One must be very cautious in speaking of such things as “the lessons of history,” for we know little of the total content of world history, and whatever “patterns” we might

detect in it are based on small and highly selective samplings. However, if the Sovereign God of history were to comment on certain key events, offer a general statement on the meaning of the whole phenomenon, and show us a bit of the ending—not merely to satisfy our curiosity, but to help us get our bearings and choose the right way home—then a light would be shining in the world for any man or woman who possessed the disposition and tenacity to seek and find. The writings of the scribes and prophets contained in the Bible have always claimed to be just such a light, and although they focus on peoples and events that seem obscure by secular standards, we would do well to consider what that light reveals.

Consider the plight of the descendants of Abraham in the land of Egypt. This situation was not due to mere “winds of fortune,” but was explicitly predicted to Abram centuries before it occurred:

Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions" (Gen. 15:13-14).

The slavery of Israel and her deliverance by the LORD on the eve of the first Passover were a divinely designed type of redemption in Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Moreover, it was a demonstration in the arena of world history that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of heaven and earth, who will do mighty works to fulfill His word to His people.

Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD

your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? (Deut. 4:34)

The career of David, son of Jesse, is another case in point. From his lowly beginnings as a keeper of his father's flocks, to his coronation as king over Judah and then all of Israel, to his exile during the uprising of his son Absalom, the odds were apparently stacked against David. What is a boy with a sling against a trained soldier, fully armed, who also happens to be over nine feet tall? If the contest had been fought in Las Vegas, who would have laid odds against Goliath? If you had been with Samuel the seer as he watched the sons of Jesse parade before him in Bethlehem that day, would you have picked David—the "runt of the litter"—as the LORD's anointed? And what chance would you have thought he had to evade the constant assassination attempts of King Saul, who had the national military establishment at his disposal? Yet,

not only did David “beat the odds” in succeeding Saul as king over all of Israel; he also returned from exile to reclaim the kingdom that Absalom had usurped. King David, of the royal tribe of Judah, was chosen to be both a type and a forebearer of the Messiah, the Son of God

...who as to his human nature was a descendant of David... (Rom. 1:3).

David prospered because, in spite of his sins, he was a man after God’s own heart, who rejoiced in God’s promise and entrusted himself to God’s purpose.

“Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me thus far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign LORD, you have spoken about the future of the house of your servant.... For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant” (2 Sam. 7:18-19, 21).

But God’s purpose through the line of David continued to be threatened by Satanic attacks. The marriage of Judah’s King Jehoram to the Baal-worshipping Athaliah (daughter of Israel’s Ahab and Jezebel) jeopardized the purpose of God through the royal line of David. Upon the death of her son Ahaziah, King of Judah, Athaliah proceeded to exterminate all legitimate successors to the Davidic throne. She established herself as queen over the land, and would have succeeded in wiping out every trace of God’s purpose through David, had one small boy not been hidden from Athaliah’s henchmen. In the young King Joash, the Davidic promise and hope were kept alive.

Within four generations, the powers of darkness would again pose a serious threat to the continuation of the Davidic dynasty. King Hezekiah, terminally ill and with no heir apparent, pleads with Yahweh for a reprieve and is granted

an additional fifteen years of life. Neither the power of Assyria nor even of death itself can extinguish the lamp of David; Hezekiah begets the infamous Manasseh, whose sins hasten the wrath of God upon the land of Judah even while preserving the purpose of God through David.

In these historical vignettes, we see more than the trite "good is stronger than evil" moral cliché. We are given repeated illustrations of a point that often escapes our notice as we struggle to maintain our own faith in the midst of personal problems and tragedies. It is a truth at which atheists and skeptics may sneer, but which they are quite powerless to refute:

*Although the wrong seems oft
so strong, God is the ruler yet.*

This present darkness is not proof against the coming of the dawn. Israel knew centuries of dark

days in Egypt; David saw his share, as did his successors. Christians proclaim a gospel in which the promised Son of David, apparently forsaken by God His Father, is handed over to the powers of darkness and death.

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (Acts 2:24-27; compare Ps. 16:8-10).



Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. The conflict between the “seed of woman” and the “seed of Satan” continues.

B. In this study, we examine the conflict between

1. Pharoah and the enslaved Israelites

2. Evil adversaries and David (God’s anointed)

3. Devilish Athaliah and the royal seed

4. Death and King Hezekiah

II. PREPARATORY READING

Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.” So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharoah. But the more they were oppressed, the

more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the field; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, "When you help the Hebrew women in child-birth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive." So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every boy that is born you must throw into the river, but let every girl live" (Exod. 1:8-22).

Notes:

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will further study the historical events pertaining to the spiritual struggle between the seed of woman and the seed of Satan.

Notes:

B. We will especially note the ability of God to work out what He says He will do (read Rom. 4:21).

IV. OUTLINE

A. Pharoah and the enslaved Israelites struggle in fulfillment of God's promise (read Exod. 1:8-22; compare Gen. 15:1-16; 50:22-26).

1. The people of promise are apparently doomed to extinction (see Gal. 3:16).

2. The situation of God's people in Egyptian bondage is seemingly hopeless.

3. *But God* had a man for the hour: "Moses, Moses!" (see Exod. 3:4-10; compare Heb. 11:23-29).

B. Evil adversaries make attempts to destroy David, God's anointed (read 1 Sam. 16:1-13).

1. Goliath and Saul oppose David in his youth (see 1 Sam. 17:1-51; 18:8-11, 19:1, 8-12).

2. Absalom rises up against David, the king (read 2 Sam. 15:1-18:33).

3. *But God* is with David throughout this turbulent period of history, protecting him as the royal seed, or offspring, through whom the promised “seed of woman” (Christ) would ultimately come into the world (see Matt. 1:1, 6, 17; compare Luke 3:31; Rom. 1:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 3:7; 22:16).

C. The devilish woman Athaliah and the “seed royal” battle for the throne in Judah (read 2 Kings 11:1ff).

1. Athaliah (Jezebel’s daughter) “proceeded to destroy the whole royal family.”

a. Is the “seed of woman” crushed and destroyed?

Notes:

Notes:

b. Have Satan and his seed won the conflict?

c. Has God's promise failed?

2. *All* the royal offspring are murdered, with one exception:

"...Jehosheba...took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes who were about to be murdered" (read 2 Kings 11:2; compare 2 Chron. 22:10-12; 23:8-11; 24:1).

3. *But God* providentially preserved the royal lineage of David (the kingly family) and kept alive the promise of victory through the "seed of woman."

D. Death and Hezekiah contend for the continuation of the promised seed line (read 2 Kings 18:1-20:21).

1. King Hezekiah's sickness is terminal (see 2 Kings 20:1-3).

2. If Hezekiah dies at this point, he will leave no heir.

3. *But God*, moved by Hezekiah's petition and His own unchanging purpose, adds fifteen years to Hezekiah's life, thus preserving the royal lineage and Messianic promise (see 2 Kings 20:6; 21:1; compare Matt. 1:10).

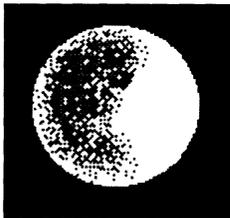
V. CONCLUSION

- A. God Almighty, time and again, shows His providential power in sustaining the "seed of woman" to its ultimate consummation and fulfillment in Christ Jesus and His church (read Gal. 3:16-29).
- B. Satan and his seed suffer defeat after defeat— but not without inflicting a heavy toll on the righteous.

Notes:

10

*CONFLICT THROUGHOUT
HISTORY (Part III)*



*God's purpose and promise
have been realized:
the seed of woman
is victorious.*

*The Lord Jesus
crushes Satan's power
at Calvary; Christ is risen!
God's eternal purpose
and its historical unfolding
have been fulfilled.*



The human mind can conjure few images to rival the stark terror of being trapped in a runaway vehicle. Whether we picture a car out of control, a plane diving toward the sea, or even a wagon careening down a steep hill, the sense of impending disaster coupled with utter helplessness is overwhelming. Yet, many people view each one of us as essentially in this very predicament. To them, we are all passengers on "Spaceship Earth," a vessel launched by the cruel winds of chance, having no fixed destination and no ultimate hope for arrival at any port. It matters not what any of the passengers do to pass the time of the voyage; it matters not how much or how little we may be enjoying the ride; it matters not what crew we may appoint to man the helm. We are

adrift on the cosmic sea with neither map nor compass. Supplies on board are limited, and tempers are getting nastier. To make matters worse, none of the passengers volunteered for this cruise.

Still, we are told that we must try and make the best of this nightmare. Even the *Titanic* had shuffleboard and a ballroom. We must try to have as pleasant a voyage as possible, even though it is hard to forget we are going nowhere. Perhaps if we busy ourselves with keeping the decks clean, preventing violent outbursts among the passengers, distributing rations, and so forth, we can stay afloat for another day or two—or maybe longer. In the meanwhile, we need to appoint committees, assign duties, and draw up a roster. The sick must be cared for; the next generation must be trained. But no amount of

diversion is quite sufficient to offset the fact that a present that has no future is as empty and futile as a voyage that has no destination.

Of course, in the absence of a genuine ship's charter, it is possible that some of the helmsmen may draw up their own proposals for the Spaceship Earth: arbitrary authorities, to be sure, but providing an illusory sense of direction for the present moment. Spaceship Earth has seen many such little captains, with their arbitrary laws and personal political agendas. In recent times, we have had "Captain" Napoleon Bonaparte and his Empire, "Captain" Lenin and his Bolshevik Revolution, "Captain" Hitler and his Third Reich, and a host of other authority figures and political programs. The religious world has also produced an abundance of self-appointed messiahs and gurus to fill the authority vacuum caused by the alleged absence of God.

The Bible itself hints at a kind of "absence" of God in this present world. Surely, by promising a more immediate experience of His presence in the world to come, the Bible implies a present "hiddenness" of God—a glory "yet to be revealed." Before the Fall, Adam and Eve intimately experienced the presence of God in the Garden of Eden—a quality of communion from which they were later expelled for their sin. Many sayings of Jesus seem to suggest that the presence and authority of God in this fallen world will be seen only through the eyes of faith—faith based on revealed and confirmed truth, but not yet a matter of indisputable, empirical observation:

He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back'" (Luke 19:12-13).

He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time" (Luke 20:9).

The apostles of Christ also speak of the tension between this present age and the eternal age to come, when "faith" shall become "sight":

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:1-2).

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? (Rom. 8:24).

In putting everything under him [man], God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor... (Heb. 2:8-9).

Though you have not seen him [Jesus], you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy... (1 Peter 1:8).

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

God is not dead, nor is He "absent," vacationing after His seven days of creation work, as deistic theologians would have us believe. But His presence and purpose in the world now work in a "hidden" way—a way that can be resisted and denied by those who have their own plans to pursue. This "hiddenness" will not go on indefinitely, however. The enemies of God will be brought to account. They will look upon Him whom they have pierced. The natural backdrop against which the present cosmic drama is being played out will one

day be rolled back to reveal the true glory of the play's divine Producer. He Himself has provided the stage and the props; He has created the actors and actresses. He has also authored the script. Whether or not you and I choose to follow that script is a matter of our own choice. We are presently free to write our own parts instead of the roles assigned to us. But no matter what we choose to do, the plot of the cosmic drama will not be changed; it has been determined from before the foundation of the world.

Kings and queens have tried to change the outcome of the divine drama. They killed many of the Producer's leading players, and many innocent "extras" as well. The combined forces of chaos, lawlessness, and death have done all in their power to ruin God's purpose; yet, history remains "His story." Because the Star of the show, for whom the entire play was written and produced, has played His role

flawlessly, He has redeemed the entire production. For this, He is worthy of far greater honor than a mere standing ovation— and He will surely receive it:

...Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:6-11).

"...Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Rev. 5:12)



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Notes:

A. This study concludes our survey of the historical conflict between Satan (and his offspring) and the woman (and her offspring).

B. The historical events we will now consider are

- 1. Wicked Haman and his attack on the Jewish remnant**
- 2. Herod and his slaughter of infants**
- 3. Satan and his direct attack on Jesus**
- 4. Jewish unbelievers and their execution of Jesus of Nazareth, their divine Messiah**

II. PREPARATORY READING

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Notes:

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them (Gen. 3:8-21).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will continue to watch this conflict as it culminates in the conflict of conflicts!**

- B. We will consider four truths from this historical sketch of the biblical human drama.**

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Wicked Haman attacks the Jewish remnant (read Esther 3:1-7:10).**
 - 1. Haman's envy and selfishness, mixed with his newly-acquired power, spells "death" for the Jews (see Esther 3:1-6).**

 - 2. The king of Persia, Ahasuerus (Xerxes) makes an unalterable decree "...to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews— young and old, and little children— on a single day..." (see Esther 3:13).**

 - 3. *But God*, through Queen Esther, spares the Jewish remnant from destruction,**

Notes:

Notes:

and the promised messianic seed line is preserved (see Esther 4:14; 5:3; 6:1-3).

B. King Herod slaughters the infants of Bethlehem (read Matt. 2:1ff).

1. The historical narrative reads: "After Jesus was born..." (v. 1).

a. This is the "He" of Genesis 3:15 (see also Gal. 4:4; Isa. 7:14; compare Gal. 3:16).

b. This is the "that" which Satan had been striving throughout fallen human history to prevent: he now attacks even more viciously and ruthlessly.

2. The narrative continues: "...he [Herod] gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem...who were two years old and under..." (v. 16; compare Jer. 31:15).

3. *But God* sent an angel to appear to Joseph, warning him to flee to Egypt

with his wife Mary and the promised "Seed of Woman" (vv. 13-14, 19-23).

C. Satan attacks Jesus directly (read Matt. 4:1-11).

1. The Serpent, Satan himself, goes after the Seed of promise.
2. If Jesus succumbs to the Tempter, God's eternal purpose will be thwarted.
3. *But God* Incarnate stands firmly on the written Word of God: "It is written..." (vv. 4, 7, 10; compare Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16).

D. The unbelieving Jews execute their appointed Messiah (read John 11:53; compare 1 Cor. 2:8).

1. The Jews' rejection and crucifixion of Jesus by "lawless men" (the Romans) is Satan's "grand finale" in seeking to trample underfoot the "Seed of woman" (see Luke 22:53).
 - a. The Tempter was active in the betrayal of Jesus (read John 13:2, 18, 27).

Notes:

Notes:

- b. The Liar was outspoken at the trial of Jesus (read Matt. 26:59-61).
 - c. The Murderer was evident at the cross of Jesus (read Acts 2:23).
2. Satan's murder of Jesus by the hands of wicked men is an evil act used by God to fulfill His eternal plan of redemption (see Acts 2:23; 3:14-15; 13:23-39; compare 1 Peter 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8).
3. *But God* raised up Jesus from the dead, powerfully declaring Him to be the Son of God (see Rom. 1:4; compare Eph. 1:18-2:7).
- a. The Seed was promised (read Rom. 1:2).
 - b. The Seed was born (of David's lineage) (read Rom. 1:3).
 - c. The Seed was declared to be the Son of God with power (read Rom. 1:4).

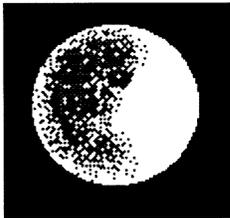
V. CONCLUSION

Notes:

- A. Satan attempted to render valueless the *promise of God* (fallen man's redemption) by destroying Eve's posterity.
- B. The *providence of God* in protecting the promised "seed" often hinged on the life of a single individual (for example, Joash).
- C. The *predicted enmity* showed itself in past history, continues to show itself even now, and will do so until the end of this age (read Rev. 12:17; 17:14).
- D. The *purpose of God* in Christ Jesus and His church stands indestructible: The "overcomers" in Christ are the ultimate victors (read Rom. 8:1, 38-39; 1 John 5:4-5, 19-21; Rev. 2:7; compare John 16:33).

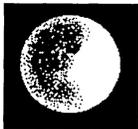
11

***THE ETERNAL PURPOSE
OF GOD: THE MYSTERY
REVEALED (Part I)***



*The mystery
of human origin and destiny
has been revealed.
Life and immortality
have been brought to light
through the gospel of
Jesus Christ.*

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD: THE MYSTERY REVEALED (Part I)



"I love a mystery!" The forgotten originator of this modern cliché spoke for many who appreciate the literary and cinematic genre associated with such names as Agatha Christie, Alfred Hitchcock, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of Sherlock Holmes). While I myself am not a great fan of this popular art form, I have had enough exposure to the classic "suspense thrillers" to understand something of their appeal.

Mystery stories rely on a kind of standardized formula within which an author can create a virtually unlimited number of variations on the "who done it" theme. Anyone vaguely familiar with the modern parlor game, *Clue*, understands how entrenched this formula is: the particulars of the plot vary from one story to another, but the basic

plot itself cannot be changed. A "who done it" that quickly dispenses with the crime solving in order to probe the psychological motivations of the criminal has ceased to be a "mystery" in the same way that a person judged "not guilty by reason of insanity" has ceased to be considered a criminal and has been reclassified a "mental case."

Whenever we move from the area of unaided human experience into the realm of divine revelation, there are usually some changes in perspective and definition that must be considered. We cannot assume that the conceptual currency of earth will have the same value when we try to use it in the heavenly realm. There are differences between the human experience of "fatherhood" and the perfect Fatherhood of God revealed to us in the Bible, for example. But there are also

points of likeness and correspondence; if there were no point of conceptual contact between heavenly things and earthly things, between God's perspective and our human experience, then the Bible's claims of divine inspiration would be meaningless, and Christ's claim to be the incarnation of deity would be absurd. If man is made in the image of God as the Bible teaches, then there is nothing ridiculous about God communicating truth to man, any more than in the case of a man communicating truth to his child. Just because a little child cannot exhaustively comprehend the mind of his father does not mean that he cannot learn from his father a lot of things that he needs to know.

And now I must return to the idea of "mystery," because our modern secular mindset will undoubtedly color our understanding of the biblical usage of this word. Yet, even with our twentieth century "Charlie

Chan" outlook on the word "mystery," we may find enough common ground with the mind of God to appreciate what the Bible says about Jesus Christ:

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him... (Rom. 16:25-26).

"Mystery," in its New Testament theological meaning, refers to the eternal purpose and plan of God which is unveiled and openly proclaimed among the nations by the apostolic gospel of Christ crucified for sins and resurrected from death. It is a message of salvation which calls for individual renunciation of all self-centeredness and a personal decision to live for God as He is revealed in Christ. This Good

News of salvation, once hidden in the mind of God, was spoken of in the divinely inspired Hebrew Scriptures, but not fully revealed or understood until the Holy Spirit guided Christ's apostles and prophets into the full truth concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things (1 Peter 1:10-12).

At first glance, the biblical concept of "mystery" seems to have nothing in common with our popu-

lar cultural sense of the term. But, as any good mystery story must, the gospel of Christ presents us with a "who done it" situation: Who crucified the Son of God? Does the blame stop with the Roman soldiers who carried out the details of the execution? Pilate could not wash his hands of the blood of Christ; nor could the Jewish leaders who incited the masses to demand His death. Surely none of us are guiltless in the matter of Christ's death, for He suffered death in order to take away the sin of the world. "Who done it?" You and I, by our personal contribution to the world's unbelief, hatred, self-centeredness, and wickedness, have called for the death of the Righteous One.

Still, mere human initiative is insufficient to explain the mystery of the gospel. No man could ascend into heaven and bring Christ down to die for sinners. The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ are a work of divine grace.

God laid upon Christ the iniquity of us all, though He did it by the hands of wicked men— men not unlike ourselves. No mere man could take Christ's life from Him; He would willingly lay it down in loving obedience to the Father's command. This same God who eternally purposed and planned the sacrificial death of His incarnate Son is the One who also raised up Christ from the dead. The mystery, hidden for long ages in the eternal counsel of the Godhead, has been fully revealed in the gospel of Christ. "Who done it?" we ask. Behold, the mystery has been revealed:

...[God] has saved us and called us to a holy life— not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:9-10).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. When we speak of God's eternal purpose, we mean a plan of redemption that existed not only before it was manifested, but before the universe was created.

B. This eternal purpose is called a "mystery": Something that was once hidden, but is now revealed.

II. PREPARATORY READING

For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to

Notes:

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make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory (Eph. 3:1-13).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

A. We will see that God actually purposed mankind's salvation in eternity: before the beginning of time.

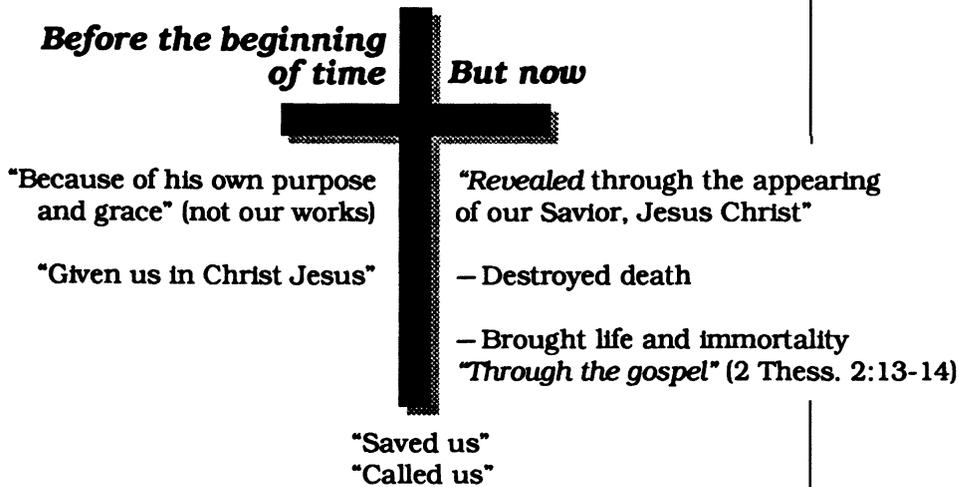
B. We will show that the various aspects of God's eternal purpose and plan are no longer a hidden mystery, but are now clearly revealed in Christ Jesus and His church.

IV. OUTLINE

A. The gospel was realized and revealed "by the power of God" (read 2 Tim. 1:8-10).

1. Note the chart below:

Notes:



2. Consider the following conclusions.

- a. Our salvation is according to God's own purpose and grace (see Titus 3:4-7).
- b. Our salvation was purposed "before the beginning of time" and made known when Christ appeared in the world (see the gospel accounts by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; note especially Matt. 28:18-20;

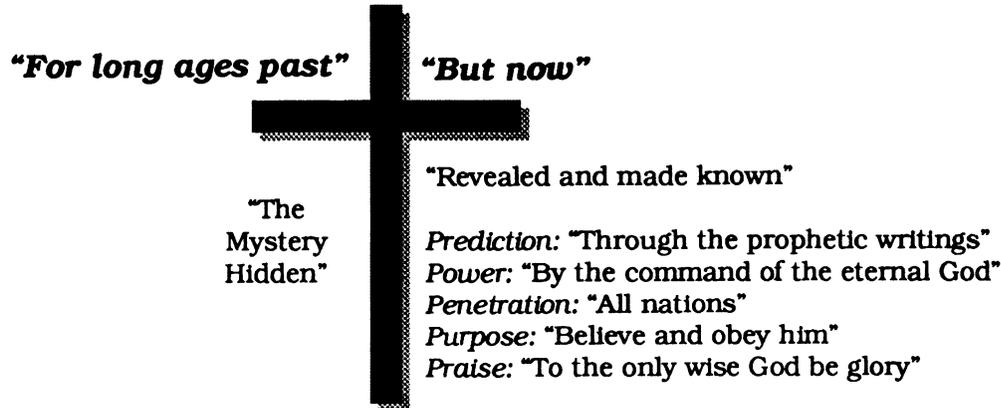
Notes:

Luke 1:1-4; John 20:30-31; 21:24;
compare 1 John 1:1-4; Heb. 2:3-4;
2 Peter 1:16-18).

c. In Christ Jesus *life and immortality*
are “brought to light” (that is,
“revealed”)— “*through the gospel*”
(see 1 Cor. 15:1-4; compare Rom.
1:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).

B. The gospel is “the revelation of God’s
mystery” (read Rom. 16:25-27).

1. Note the chart below:



a. According to the “gospel and proc-
lamation of Jesus Christ”

b. According to the “revelation of the mystery”

c. According to the “command of the eternal God”

2. Consider the following conclusions:

a. Spiritual security and stabilization are by means of the “gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ.”

b. The revelation of the divine mystery was *commanded* by the eternal God, *confirmed* by the Old Testament prophecies, and *completed* by Jesus Christ.

c. This mystery is no longer God’s secret purpose, but is “now revealed and made known...so that all nations might believe and obey him” (see John 3:16, 36; Heb. 5:8-9).

V. CONCLUSION

A. Man’s plight is not left to fate or chance; his salvation is in Jesus of Nazareth,

Notes:

Notes:

“according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

B. The mystery regarding my identity as a human being has been revealed.

1. “Where do I come from?” (I am created by God in His own image.)

2. “Why am I here?” (I am here to glorify God by responding to His purpose in Christ.)

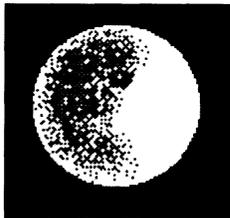
3. “Where am I going?” (I am going to live on this earth with Jesus for a short time, and to be glorified with Him forever.)

C. Life and immortality— God’s purposed destiny for mankind— has been brought to light through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

D. God has, indeed, purposed and planned in eternity!

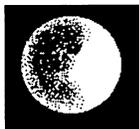
12

***THE ETERNAL PURPOSE
OF GOD: THE MYSTERY
REVEALED (Part II)***



*Note carefully that
those he "foreknew"
he "foreordained":
foreordained to "be conformed
to the likeness of his Son."
The Bible does not speak
of foreordination
(or predestination)
of those who are
not in Christ.*

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD: THE MYSTERY REVEALED (Part II)



"Most men lead lives of quiet desperation." I can't recall who said it, or even the precise phraseology of the quotation, but I am convinced that its originator was a keen observer of fallen human nature. There does exist, however, another kind of human nature—a Humanity that has moved beyond the curse of sin and death which brings loneliness, alienation, and despair into man's life. The Originator of this New Humanity took upon Himself the curse that hid the face of God from our view. He wore upon His brow the thorns of an unfriendly cosmos. He felt the murderous abuse of the hostile mob. He took upon Himself the naked culpability of Adam and his descendants before the awesome majesty of God. Out of His vicarious cry of desperation ("My God, my God, why

have you forsaken me?") emerged a New Humanity which cries out in exaltation, "Abba, Father!" Where is this new race of men and women? Do they still exist on the earth, or did the Founder of the New Mankind snatch them immediately away to live with Him forever beyond the realm of thorns and thistles?

No; the New Men and Women live yet among the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve. Like their Master, they have always been a conspicuous but rarely appreciated element in the world. When their numbers or social influence begin to upset the complacently putrid mediocrity of worldly standards (all too rare an occurrence), they are usually maligned, abused, hounded, and driven underground until the *status quo* rots for lack of salt, and falls to rise no more for lack of light. They are here, and they are

the salt of the earth and the light of the world, even though they are despised and rejected like the Tender Shoot from which they spring:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered" (Rom. 8:36; compare Ps. 44:22).

Ironically—and yet, how could it be otherwise?—the New Men and Women who most closely follow the Original New Man are the very ones who are least appreciated and most abused:

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me" (Matt. 5:11).

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.'

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also" (John 15:18-20).

For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to the angels as well as to men.... To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment, we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world (1 Cor. 4:9, 11-13).

The early New Men and Women wore the scars of disgrace among men as though they were medals of honor before God—and indeed, they were!

Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus (Gal. 6:17).

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church (Col. 1:24).

The secret of the invincible love and zealous benevolence manifested by the New Men—the thing that made them “tick”—was a deep realization of solidarity with the Risen Jesus. They saw themselves as the spiritual body of Christ on earth, animated by His Spirit, responsive to the commands of their Living Head. And along with newness of life, Jesus had brought them new understandings: The first would be last, and the last would be first; the humble would be exalted, while those who exalted themselves would be humbled; those who worshipped their own lives would lose them, but those who gave up their lives to serve the cause of Christ and His gospel would find eternal life. Such extraordinary values and standards inevitably brought them into con-

flict with the mediocrity and decadence of the surrounding culture:

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times, you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions (Heb. 10:32-34).

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you (1 Peter 4:1-4).

If you are seeking the New Men and Women, do not look for this world's celebrities, heroes, trendsetters, and matinee idols; look instead for "the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world." For, although some of the New Men may seem to get along in the world with only an occasional minor skirmish, and a few may even win recognition for outstanding service to humanity, by far the bulk of them will be found outside the fringes of reputable society:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:26-27).

Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:5)

Nonetheless, this despised mongrel race, made up of those from every nation who are looking for a heavenly country, is said to stand at the center of the universe with the Incarnate God. In the eternal purpose of God, they are as inseparably linked to Jesus Christ as a body is bound to its head. The subject of human history and of the entire cosmos is not armies and kings and empires; it is Jesus Christ and His church. In the end, this will be made evident to all:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1-2).

We need not lead lives of quiet desperation. Because of God's eternally purposed grace in Christ Jesus, we can be born again into a New Humanity that looks to the future in joyous anticipation. ■

Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. The Bible, God's revealed Word, teaches us about Christ as the Redeemer purposed in eternity and promised through the prophets in history.

- B. God's Word also teaches us about the church, the body of Christ, as the redeemed of God, purposed in eternity and promised through the prophets in history.

II. PREPARATORY READING

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in

Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment— to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession— to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:3-14).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will demonstrate that *the church was not an afterthought* in the mind of God: *it was purposed in eternity.*

- B. We will emphasize the importance of redemption *in Christ Jesus and His church.*

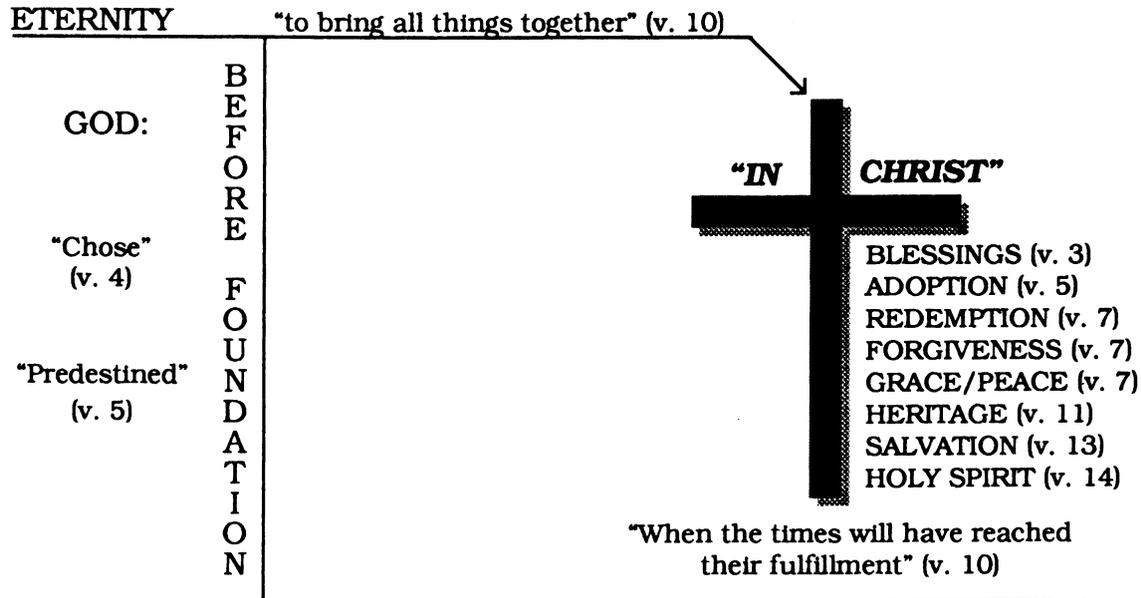
IV. OUTLINE

- A. Christ the Redeemer was purposed and promised (re-read Eph. 1:3-14).

Notes:

1. Note the chart below:

"Making Known The Mystery Purposed In Christ" (v. 9)



2. Consider the following conclusions.

- a. God's purposed redemption in Christ is rooted in His own eternal nature, in accordance with "his

pleasure and will" (v. 5), "the riches of his grace" (v. 7), "his good pleasure" (v. 9), and "the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (v. 11).

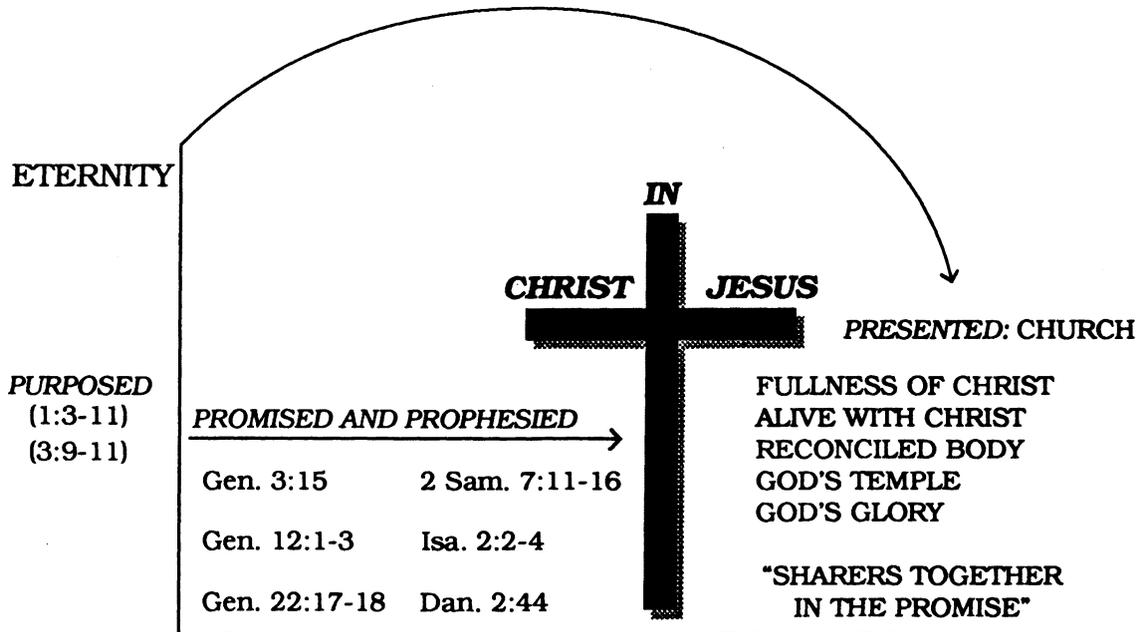
- b. God was active before the foundation of the world.
- c. All history points to the focal point in time: the "fullness of the times" (v. 10, literal Greek translation; compare Mark 1:15; Rom. 5:6; Gal. 4:4-5).
- d. The mystery of God's eternal purpose is made known in Christ.
- e. All the riches of God's grace are realized "in Christ."

B. The church is God's eternally purposed and prophetically promised people: redeemed in Christ (read Eph. 3:1-11).

Notes:

1. Note the chart below:

"God's Wisdom Made Known Through The Church" (vv. 10-11)



"ACCORDING TO HIS ETERNAL PURPOSE" (vv. 10-11)

2. Consider the following conclusions.

- a. God's manifold wisdom is made known through the church.

- b. The church's existence and work is "according to God's eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus."
- c. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is of inestimable worth and overwhelming importance (review above chart).

V. CONCLUSION

A. In eternity (outside of space and time), God Himself foreknew and foreordained

- 1. *The Savior* (see 1 Peter 1:18-20)
- 2. *The salvation message* (see 1 Cor. 2:7)
- 3. *The saved* (see Rom. 8:28-30)

B. In history (within space and time), God Himself provided and presented

- 1. Christ Jesus, the Redeemer of the world (see 1 Peter 1:10-12; Acts 4:12)

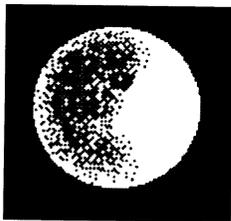
Notes:

Notes:

2. Christ's church, the community of those redeemed from the world (see Eph. 1:22-23; compare 5:23)

13

A REVIEW



*This was in accordance with
the eternal purpose
which He carried out
in Christ Jesus our Lord,
in whom we have boldness
and confidence
through faith in Him
(Ephesians 3:11-12 NASB).*



The comparative study of human religions has shed much light on the unique beauty of biblical revelation. By setting God's revelation to Israel and the church against the dark background of pagan polytheism and animism (nature worship), its true splendor shines forth like a jewel among common stones. Certainly, there are some similarities between biblical revelation and pagan religions, for both draw on human cultures and both profess to answer the ultimate questions of human existence. Much has been learned, moreover, about biblical theological concepts (such as "covenant") from viewing them in their wider setting in the ancient world. The striking distinctiveness of biblical revelation is even more impressive than its parallels with pagan traditions, however.

Many human cultures retain myths and legends that sound similar to such biblical themes as the Garden of Eden, the Serpent, the Fall, the Great Flood, and the Tower of Babel. Not a few also have ancient hopes and prophecies regarding a great Deliverer who would come from beyond the world to rescue the faithful from the curse of death, doom, and destruction. Modern skeptics attribute these remarkable similarities to coincidental parallels that occur as by-products of any developing civilization. The many differences in the various cultural traditions and legends are highlighted while the essential similarities are downplayed. There were only so many basic kinds of mythological explanations conceivable to ancient peoples, we are told; it is inevitable that we should find many embellishments and

variations of the same themes. The Christian is not convinced of this explanation, however. It seems to deliberately overlook the remarkable nature and number of similarities in all the ancient stories. Surely, the human imagination was never as narrow and limited as this naturalistic theory maintains. The great differences that exist between the cultures and religions of the world must be accounted for, but so also must these extraordinary similarities.

The biblical explanation is that all human cultures originate from one Creator and one primary human pair, Adam and Eve. After the Fall, their descendants were dispersed throughout the earth, taking with them fragments of the primeval revelation of God which had been entrusted to certain patriarchs. By reason of time, space, and the influence of sin, this ancient knowledge became corrupted and all but lost, though perhaps

some cultures retained certain traditions more accurately than others. Most of the major themes of the ancient revelation were preserved in the various human cultures as they spread across the world, but only in highly adulterated forms. In the course of history, God graciously chose Abraham and his descendants to be the repository of divinely revealed oracles. Thus, through Moses and the prophets, the unadulterated knowledge of God once lost to the world through corruption was eventually restored, and the eternal purpose of God was progressively realized and revealed through Abraham's lineage.

Here, we come to one of those amazingly unique features of biblical revelation: it offers a *meaningful* view of human history. Not only is this view of history unique among the ancients (whose deepest thinkers could only conceive of time and events as spinning around in a meaningless cycle or spiral, like a

cosmic merry-go-round), but it is almost as shocking to modern secular people. We still use the birth of Christ as our point of reference in dating events and marking the movement of time. But increasingly, because we have lost any coherent view of the universe as a whole, and of our own place in it, we have no meaningful sense of history. Atoms and molecules and energy particles; electromagnetism and gravity; blind forces in collision and collusion; phenomena without design or purpose—this is modern secular man's view of all that transpires in the universe. We came from the void, and we are going nowhere. Why pursue a serious study of history? Why pursue *anything* seriously?

In startling contrast, the biblical viewpoint presents an understanding of man and history that is full of meaning. Man is created, not only of the dust of the earth, but also of the breath of God. The *eternal purpose of God* is worked out in

the arena of *human history!* History is the sphere of God's saving activity on behalf of sinful, fallen mankind. Christ redeems not only the church (as if that weren't enough!), but all of space and time—all of history and the entire cosmos. Man is significant: he can choose to align himself with God's redemptive purpose in Christ, and thus share in it; or, he can choose to turn away from the light and warmth of the Son and step into the cold outer darkness of eternal meaninglessness.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world,

but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deed will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God" (John 3:16-21).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A.** The teacher or student may review the first twelve chapters (i.e. lessons) in their entirety, or any specific section requiring further consideration.
- B.** An excellent review would consist of a chronological correlation, tying the previous twelve lessons together in a systematic way.
- 1.** To do this in a class setting, the teacher must have a good grasp of the previous material *as a whole unit of study*.
 - 2.** A study of the two charts concerning the Redeemer (Christ) and the redeemed (the church) in Lesson Twelve would provide an excellent overview of the study thus far (see pp. 148, 150).

II. PREPARATORY READING

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called

Notes:

Notes:

according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:28-39).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

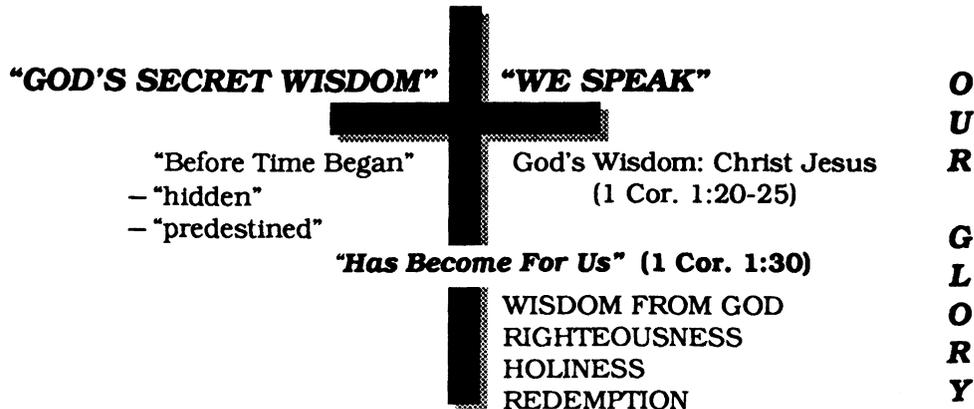
- A. We will review briefly our study of the eternal purpose and plan of God.

B. Through analytical charts, we will summarize the redemptive purpose of God concerning Christ and His church which is set forth in the Bible.

IV. OUTLINE

A. God's secret wisdom has been revealed in a mystery (read 1 Cor. 2:6-10).

1. Note the chart below:



Notes:

a. God predestined (v. 7).

b. God prepared (v. 9).

c. God revealed (v. 10).

2. Consider the following conclusions.

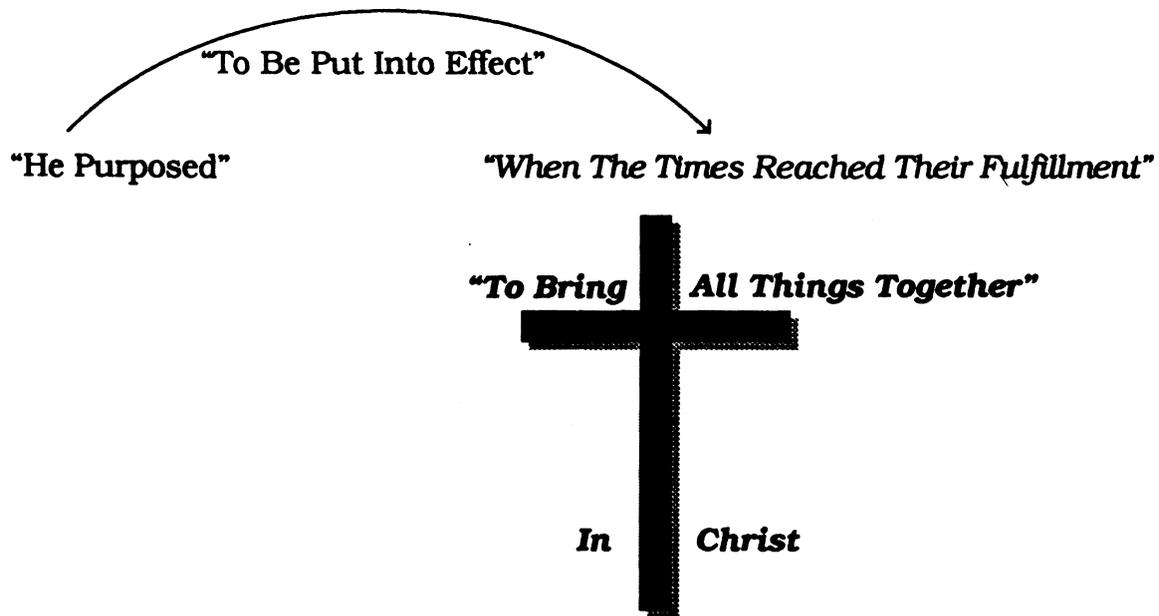
a. The apostle Paul was preaching "the secret" (the mystery no longer "hidden") which God had *predestined* and *prepared*.

b. All of this (note the chart) was for the glory of those who would respond obediently to the preaching of their salvation: "*Christ crucified for sins*" (read 1 Cor. 1:18-2:2).

c. Christ "became for us" (that is, for those in Christ) *wisdom from God, righteousness, holiness, and redemption* (read 1 Cor. 1:30).

B. God made known the mystery of His will (read Eph. 1:3-14; 3:1-11).

1. Note the chart below:



- a. God made known the mystery of His will (see Eph. 1:9).
- b. In other generations, the mystery was not made known (see Eph. 3:4-6; Col. 1:19-27).

Notes:

c. Christ was revealed at the end of the times for your sake (see 1 Peter 1:17-21).

2. Consider the following conclusions.

a. Both Jesus Christ and the church are involved in God's will; they are inseparable (read Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:1ff; Eph. 4:7-16).

b. God brought His purpose to a "fullness of the times" (read Eph. 1:10; Mark 1:15; Rom. 5:6; Gal. 4:4-5; compare 1 Peter 1:10-12).

c. There, in the "fullness of the times," God summed up *all things* in Christ (read Eph. 1:10; compare Col. 1:19-20).

d. The Ephesian Christians "heard the word of truth" and faithfully obeyed that Good News of salvation (read Eph. 1:13; compare Acts 2:38; 5:32).

C. An essential relationship exists between the Redeemer and the redeemed in the eternal purpose of God (read Rom. 8:28-30).

1. Note the chart below:

"Those Who Have Been Called According To His Purpose"
(Rom. 8:28-30)

"Those God..."

Foreknew

Predestined

"To Be"
"CONFORMED TO THE LIKENESS OF HIS SON"

"Those He Also..."

Called

Justified

Glorified

"Those Who Love God"

Notes:

2. Consider the following conclusions.

a. Those whom God "*foreknew*" He also "*predestined*" to share in the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ: The Bible says nothing about predestination of those not in Christ.

b. Note carefully: Paul speaks of "those who love God" (see 2 Tim. 3:4; compare Rom. 1:30).

V. CONCLUSION

A. To summarize our study thus far, we recall that God

1. ***Purposed*** in eternity
2. ***Predicted*** in Eden
3. ***Protected*** throughout the flood
4. ***Promised*** in Canaan
5. ***Preserved*** throughout history

6. **Presented** in the fullness of the times

7. **Provides**, in Christ Jesus and His church, redemption until the end of time

B. All of this was “according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (see Eph. 3:11).

Notes:



THE ETERNAL
PURPOSE AND
PLAN OF
GOD

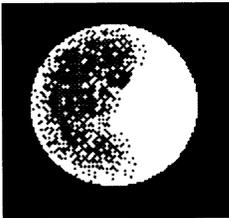
Book II

***The Creator...Man's Need
...The Redeemer***

Larry Deason
with Bill Bean

14

*GOD'S PURPOSE
AND MANKIND*



*Biblical foreordination/
predestination is not
Calvinistic predestination.
Never at any time
is man's constitution
(i.e., choice) destroyed.*



God has done more than we can comprehend to bring salvation to the human race, but He has been opposed at every step by Satan, the father of lies. The Devil has done a remarkable job of keeping multitudes from understanding the true power of the gospel of Christ:

"When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart" (Matt. 13:19).

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

The Serpent of Eden is the deceiver of nations, the very na-

tions to whom the Incarnate God sent the proclamation of eternal salvation. Men and women must have "ears to hear" that saving message. They must have hearts predisposed to seek and follow truth wherever it may lead. They must have minds that are open to the saving truth that God has revealed in Scripture and in Christ. But Satan, cloaked in the spirit of the age, has succeeded in efficiently and effectively using the modern propaganda networks of the world to close the minds of the masses. A certain view of truth, a particular picture of reality, is consistently conveyed in the public classroom, the mass media, the popular press, and every other vehicle of cultural expression—including many religious institutions. This pervasive viewpoint is not really new; it is the perennial

philosophy of the deification of man preached by Satan to the first pair:

"...you will be like God..." (Gen. 3:5).

This seductive flattery has always proven to be Satan's "ace in the hole," a lure too delicious for the human race to long resist. Yet, it is an empty promise, and the pride that inflates its victim inevitably precedes his downfall. There has never been a false gospel or a bogus religion that didn't have at its core the perennial philosophy of human deification—the lie that man is meant to be his own god. It is the foundation of every false way.

In past ages, the most common expressions of The Big Lie were legalism and idolatry. In spite of his claim to know the true and living God, the man who believed he could be his own savior by religious observances and good works was just as deceived as the ignorant pagan who bowed down to the work of his own hands.

The struggle between the religion of Yahweh and that of Baal in Old Testament history was essentially the conflict between the revealed truth of God and the perennial philosophy. Both systems were complete worldviews, totally opposed to one another. The point of the struggle wasn't simply a matter of the title by which God should be addressed. Baalism was a nature religion, worshipping the impersonal forces of the cosmos under symbolic representations of power and fertility. The revealed religion of Yahweh centered around the supernatural, personal Creator of all cosmic forces. Likewise, the contest between Christianity and Gnosticism in the early church was a struggle to prevent the purity of the revealed truth of redemption in Christ from being polluted by an elaborate system of devotion to created entities and human self-effort.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive

philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ (Col. 2:8).

The baseless optimism of the secular humanist and the mystical pursuits of the New Age enthusiast are new variations on the same ancient religion: naturalism. Both secular science and Eastern mysticism deny the existence of a transcendent Creator. To the secularist, matter and energy constitute the only reality; to the mystic, impersonal universal mind is all that really exists. Yet, both agree that there is no personal, transcendent God above and beyond the natural realm who created and sustains it. Thus, two apparently diverse solutions to the problem of "being" end up in exactly the same place. Neither offers any ultimate meaning for human personality; neither will admit the possibility of a revelation from a personal God to personal creatures made in His image;

neither offers any reasonable hope for human salvation. The secularist's hope in evolution is of as little worth to dying men and women as is the Hindu's belief in reincarnation— and make no mistake: we are *all* dying men and women. The blind forces of natural selection and the impersonal laws of Karma are equally incapable of planning anything, revealing anything, resolving anything, or redeeming anything. Impersonal cosmic mechanisms can never respond to the human need for loving relationships. Yet, most people have been effectively corralled into some form of naturalistic philosophy before they are even able to objectively consider the answers offered in the Bible.

What if a transcendent Creator really *does* exist: a God who contains within the unity of His being a plurality of Persons— say, "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit"? And what if these eternal Persons within this one Being planned

together an eternal purpose, before the foundation of the world? Being omniscient, God could foreknow the course of history, and being omnipotent, He could direct its movement toward the fulfillment of His purpose. Most importantly, being the Source of personality and love, He could create mankind in His own image, in preparation for the fullness of the time when He would Himself take on human nature to accomplish the costly work of redemption. Finally, He could speak to, and through, some of the human personalities He had created in His own image, to reveal to them His eternal purpose and plan.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." (Gen. 1:26).

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who

does not lie, promised before the beginning of time... (Titus 1:1-2).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. The true and living God purposed redemption for mankind in eternity.
- B. God, being who and what He is, was able, not only to *purpose* His plan of redemption, but also to successfully work out His predetermined plan.
1. God deliberately *determined* redemption.
 2. God decisively *decreed* redemption.
 3. God dramatically *delivered* redemption.

II. PREPARATORY READING

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

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We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (Rom. 8:18-30).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

A. We shall see that God's character and being are such that they correspond with His plan and purpose.

B. We shall realize that God actually “purposed a purpose” and predetermined (that is, *predestined; foreordained; determined beforehand*) a plan.

Notes:

IV. OUTLINE

A. In His own essential nature, God is

- 1. Eternal (see Exod. 3:14; Isa. 40:28; 57:15; compare 1 Tim. 1:17)**
- 2. Spirit (see John 4:24 and compare Luke 24:39; also, Exod. 32:20 and compare 1 Tim. 6:16)**
- 3. Omniscient— that is, “all knowing; possessing complete, universal knowledge” (see Ps. 139:1-6; Acts 15:18; Heb. 4:13)**
- 4. Omnipotent— that is, “almighty; unlimited in authority and power” (see Isa. 45:12; Gen. 1:1; 17:1; 35:11; Eph. 3:20-21)**

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5. Omnipresent— that is, “everywhere present” (see Jer. 23:23-24; Ps. 139:7-12; Acts 17:23-24)

B. In His personal character, God is

1. Holy (see Ps. 145:17; Hab. 1:12-13; compare 1 Peter 1:15-17)

2. Just (see Gen. 18:25; compare Rom. 2:5)

3. Mercy (see Isa. 53:6-12; compare Titus 3:5)

4. Love (see Ps. 25:6 and compare 1 John 4:8, 10, 16; also note Rom. 5:6-8)

5. Truth (see Rom. 3:4; Heb. 6:12-20; Mal. 3:6; John 14:6)

C. In His purposing and predetermining activity before the foundation of the world, God

1. Purposed [literally, "set forth"] a plan (see Rom. 3:25; 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 1:9, 11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9)
2. Foreordained/predestined [literally, "determined before"] the historical outworking of His plan (see Acts 4:28; Eph. 1:5, 11)
 - a. He has predestined people and things (read Eph. 1:4-5; compare Acts 4:28).
 - b. His predestination is related to individuals (read Jer. 1:5-6 and compare 20:9; also read Gal. 1:15 and Acts 26:19; carefully compare Acts 2:23 and John 10:18).
 - c. His predestination has to do with redemption (read Eph. 1:4-5, 11; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Rev. 13:8).
 - d. His predestination is a divine choice, brought about through calling, persuading, and drawing of

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individuals into a personal salvation in Christ Jesus (read John 3:16; Rom. 14:11-12; Titus 2:11; compare John 6:44; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Acts 16:14).

V. CONCLUSION

A. God has revealed Himself to be a righteous being who has purposed and predestined—without violating man's freedom to exercise his will.

1. We have seen that God purposed and predetermined in eternity.

2. We shall see God

a. *Predicting* in Eden

b. *Protecting* during the Flood

c. *Promising* in Canaan

d. *Preserving* throughout history

e. *Presenting* in the “fullness of the times”

f. *Providing* in Christ and His church for all time and eternity

B. Hence salvation in Christ and His church was purposed and planned by God before the world began.

1. **Extreme Calvinistic concepts of predestination are not biblical predestination; man's constitution and free will are not violated in God's purpose.**

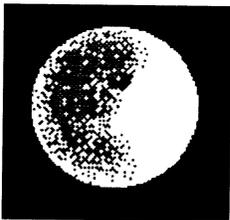
2. **Scripture never speaks of predestination, *except* of those “in Christ Jesus.”**

C. Therefore, every individual, by his own free choice, will choose to remain lost (unsaved), or to be saved according to God's eternal purpose and plan of salvation.

Notes:

15

*GOD'S CREATING
OF ALL THINGS*



*"I am the LORD,
your Holy One,
Israel's Creator,
your King."*

*This is what the LORD says—
he who made a way
through the sea,
a path through
the mighty waters
(Isaiah 43:15-16).*

GOD'S CREATING OF ALL THINGS



Several years ago the great atheistic mathematician, Bertrand Russell, wrote a provocative book entitled *Why I Am Not A Christian*. While making no claim to be Russell's literary equal or intellectual peer, I must insist that any Christian is his philosophical superior. This brief essay should perhaps be entitled *Why I Am Not A Materialist*, for while I must refrain from offering a fully developed Christian apologetic for lack of space, I introduce the following lesson with a refutation of materialistic/naturalistic atheism.

The existence and order of the universe—including the observer, man himself—is sufficient evidence that, whatever else may be true, idolatry and atheism are certainly false:

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

First, let us consider the epistemological inadequacies of the philosophy of naturalism—that is, the insufficiency of impersonal matter and energy to account for the phenomenon of human knowledge. That human beings possess rationality, knowledge, and understanding is as self-evident as the fact that human logic, reasoning, and understanding often become twisted and perverted. Still, we dare not completely abandon all claims to know or understand *anything*. Suicide, whether intellectual or any other kind, is an act of desperation that offers no escape from the

darkness of despair. Everyone, in practice, claims to know some things as certainties; even the philosophical agnostic is certain that certainty is impossible! But such self refuting and self-contradictory "logic" abounds whenever man's natural reason is exalted as the highest source of knowledge in the universe. Thus, C.S. Lewis repeatedly and eloquently insisted that in order for human science and reasoning to have any validity at all, they must cease to claim autonomy from God and humbly admit their dependence upon Absolute Reason:

When I accept Theology I may find difficulties, at this point or that, in harmonizing it with some particular truths which are imbedded in...science. But I can get in, or allow for, science as a whole. Granted that Reason is prior to matter and that the light of that primal Reason illuminates finite

*minds, I can understand how men should come, by observation and inference, to know a lot about the universe they live in. If, on the other hand, I swallow the scientific cosmology as a whole, then not only can I not fit in Christianity, but I cannot even fit in science. **If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees.***¹

We must not allow ourselves to be distracted by any semantical sleight of hand whereby illusions of purpose and design are smuggled into the materialist's absurd, accidental universe. Without a Personal

Creator, the cosmos can have no design; without design, the cosmos has no objective purpose. If nobody designed my senses to perceive or my mind to think, then any slightest resemblance between my personal understanding of reality and reality as it actually exists must be purely accidental and coincidental. But this conclusion works against *all* understandings of reality: materialistic atheism as well as Christian theism.

Second, consider the mathematical improbabilities of chance, plus time, plus impersonal elements, producing our present cosmos of undeniable complexity and harmonious organization.

Eminent British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle reminds us of the well-known fact that "even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup" the chance of producing the basic enzymes of life by random processes without intelligent direction

*would be approximately one in 10 with 40,000 zeroes after it. It is impossible to comprehend such a number, but a comparison can be made. The likelihood of reaching out and by chance plucking a particular **atom** out of the **universe** would be about 1 in 10 with 80 zeroes after it.²*

One has to suspect the objectivity and honesty of paleontologists and others of the scientific community who confidently affirm the human engineering evident in the most primitive and unpromising bit of chipped rock or hewed bone, but stubbornly deny that man himself exhibits any characteristics of divine design whatsoever.

Third, I am not a materialistic atheist because naturalism requires a belief in what is patently absurd. This faith in matter and energy as ultimate reality would have us accept that

*Everything ultimately came
from nothing
Order came from chaos
Harmony came from discord
Life came from nonlife
Reason came from
irrationality
Personality came from
nonpersonality
Morality came from amorality.³*

It is the old story of the stream that rose higher than its source: an impossibility that contradicts common sense, everyday experience, and the dictates of logic.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened (Rom. 1:21).

Finally, the most obvious and crucial deficiency of naturalism is its utter failure to furnish man with a single clue as to his true meaning and identity:

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:29-31).



¹C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (revised and expanded edition), "Is Theology Poetry?" (New York City, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1980), pp. 91-92. (Emphasis mine.)

²Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon, *America: The Sorcerer's New Apprentice* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1988), pp. 220-21.

³Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), p. 191.

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. "In the beginning God created..."
(Gen. 1:1).

B. The Bible (God's written word) declares that the LORD is the creator of all things (read 1 Cor. 8:5-6; Heb. 1:1-3; compare Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11).

II. PREPARATORY READING

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things

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were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant (Col. 1:9-23).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We desire to realize that God created and fashioned all that exists, both visible and invisible (read Col. 1:16).**

B. We want to comprehend that the whole biblical revelation and its central theme are primarily concerned with the human creature (read Ps. 8).

IV. OUTLINE

A. God created the invisible reality: the angelic realm consisting of

1. Authorities, powers, and dominions (see Eph. 1:21; 6:21)
2. A specific, but unnamed, wicked rebellion (see 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; compare Matt. 25:41)
3. Faithful angels (see Heb. 1:14; Matt. 18:10)

B. God created the visible reality: the physical realm consisting of

1. The heavens and the earth (see Gen. 1:1ff; compare John 1:1-3; Isa. 45:18-19; Ps. 19:1)

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2. Mankind: the man and the woman
(see Gen. 1-2; compare Ps. 8 and
Heb. 2:5-18)

a. Man's *composition* is a dichotomous union of the *material* [body] and the *nonmaterial* [soul/spirit] (see 1 Thess. 5:13; Eccles. 12:7; compare Rom. 8:23; 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; 15:1ff; 2 Cor. 5:1-10).

b. Man's *character* is a paradoxical union of the image of God [initial innocence; nobility; intelligence; volition] and the sinfulness of the Fall (see Gen. 3:6-4:6; 6:1ff; Eccles. 3:18-22; Rom. 7:7ff; James 3:9-10).

c. Man's *circumstance* was one of abundant provision with a single prohibition to test his love and loyalty (see Gen. 1-3).

C. God created the nonmaterial (metaphysical) aspect of mankind: the soul/spirit (read Eccles. 12:7; compare Gen. 2:7; Heb. 12:9).

1. Man is/has a soul, even as he is/has a body (see 1 Peter 3:20; Heb. 4:12; 1 Cor. 15:45; Matt. 10:28; 16:25-26).

2. The word "soul" is not restricted to a single usage in Scripture.
 - a. It sometimes means *the complete individual* (read Ezek. 18:20).

 - b. It sometimes means *the physical (natural) life* (read Gen. 1:30; Matt. 16:25-26).

 - c. It sometimes means *the eternal (spiritual) aspect of man* (read Matt. 10:28; Heb. 4:12).

3. The words "soul" and "spirit" are distinguished from each other (see 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12).
 - a. Man has a "spirit" within himself/herself (read 1 Cor. 2:11; 1 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Cor. 7:1).

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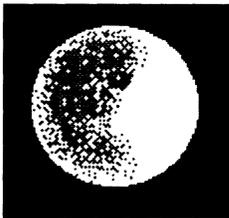
b. Unlike the animals; man's spirit does not die when the body dies; it survives the death of the body and can exist apart from the body (read Eccles. 3:18-22; compare Eccles. 12:7; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 12:2-4).

V. CONCLUSION

- A. The eternal God, Creator of all things, brought man into the world He had made.
- B. The man was placed in the most favorable environment: fellowship with his Creator.
- C. Man is not merely an earthbound creature; he is designed (body, soul, and spirit) to be *redeemed* (read Rom. 8:23; compare 1 Thess. 5:23).

16

*MAN'S ORIGINAL POSITION
AND THE TWO TREES*



*Originally, man was
created in "God's image."
Man was: holy (without sin),
ignorant of sin, innocent,
intelligent, and free
to make choices.*

MAN'S ORIGINAL POSITION AND THE TWO TREES



How can modern people, reared in a culture in which science and technology have usurped the authority of biblical revelation, ever come to a place where they can seriously consider the Genesis account of the human situation? Certain hurdles will have to be cleared before most people of even moderate education will be able to re-examine the biblical account of man with any degree of objectivity.

Darwin and his naturalistic evolutionary theory have long represented a formidable obstacle to be reckoned with. From our earliest years of exposure to books and television, through our classroom training in biological and geological science, and into our daily adult interaction with those who define fashion and good taste for the masses, the philosophy of natural-

istic evolution confronts us as an "established fact" on every side. Yet most of the people who uncritically accept Darwinism, neo-Darwinism, or any of the variations of naturalistic evolution that are offered to compensate for the weaknesses in every other particular version of it, are unable to articulate the most basic tenets of the evolutionary faith. Most will not even acknowledge that naturalistic evolution (like special creation) must indeed be accepted by *faith*, since by its very nature it cannot be empirically demonstrated or observed.

But how can anyone be sure that a naturalistic explanation of man and the universe is correct when there is such widespread disagreement among the experts as to *the way* in which evolution is supposed to have occurred? We are

told that, though scientists may disagree on the mechanism and precise manner by which evolution takes place, they are all agreed that the evidence overwhelmingly proves that it did (and does). But aside from the fact that several highly qualified scientists reject all the naturalistic evolutionary theories, many who are confirmed believers in naturalistic evolution point out the evidential shortcomings of the theory. The fossil record has never come close to supporting Darwin's view that all species gradually evolved from more primitive ones. Stephen Jay Gould, a strong proponent of naturalistic evolution, has said:

*"The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology."*¹

If the naturalistic view were true, the fossil record should contain innumerable examples of inter-

mediate, transitional forms; but though the fossil record has been filled in considerably in the hundred and twenty years since Darwin's theory was published, not one of the *billions* of "missing links" needed to support the theory has ever been found!

Darwin has done Christians a great service, however. He has increased our appreciation for the Creator by illuminating the adaptive capacities that God placed within each created "kind." Our modern term "species" cannot be automatically equated with the biblical word, "kind." Apparently, God provided for a type of "evolution" (i.e. change) *within* the confines of each created "kind" through the principles of natural selection and genetic mutation that Darwin brought to light. It is obvious, for example, that the modern horse is larger than its prehistoric ancestor, and that the dog has undergone radical changes and alterations since its prototype first

became domesticated. So, while the biblical position allows for changes to occur within the broad perimeters of created "kinds," it does not allow for an unbroken evolutionary chain from amoeba to man, which is essentially what all modern evolutionary models propose.

Even if modern thinkers are able to clear the hurdle of naturalistic evolution, they immediately face another barrier: destructive biblical criticism. Building on the naturalistic developmentalism of Darwin, Julius Wellhausen and his followers began to seek evidence that the Hebrew religion of the Old Testament had naturally grown out of a primitive religion of animism and poly-daemonism (worship of natural forces represented by horrible gods). With this presupposition, the higher critics proceeded to attack the Bible with paste and scissors, cutting its unified text up into the "original" pieces from which it supposedly developed. One of the many unfortunate results of this

approach has been a loss of confidence in the Bible as a unified, noncontradictory divine revelation. For example, Genesis 1 is often seen as contradicting Genesis 2 instead of complementing it. The open-minded student, however, is aware that any type of presuppositional bias can easily be imposed upon a text; we can "read into" the biblical text almost anything we desire to see there. The plea of conservative biblical scholarship, like that of our modern judicial system, is that the biblical witness should be allowed to speak for itself, should be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and should be impartially judged on the basis of facts, not on the basis of prevailing opinion. It is possible, and certainly more consistent with biblical evidence, to interpret Genesis 1 in a way that harmonizes with Genesis 2. Genesis 1 presents man in his cosmic setting; Genesis 2 presents man "close up," as the object of the biblical theme of redemption.

Certainly, difficulties will face the modern thinker who chooses to adopt the biblical view of man, and biblical testimony as a whole. Because Scripture deals with ultimate issues of human existence, such as origins and destiny, its language is forced to describe realities that transcend human experience. In discussing the origin of man, for example, biblical language must draw pictures and analogies from the world with which ancient peoples were familiar, in order to convey factual truths from a level of reality that was (and is) unfamiliar. Remember that God's Word, while originally given to the ancients, was divinely intended to suffice for all peoples of all times without ever becoming obsolete. Biblical language can transcend space and time; scientific language cannot. Figurative language may be used in Scripture, but fictitious accounts of history and the cosmos will not be found there.

There was an original man and woman, created by God to live before Him in a relationship of responsible love and loyalty. A test was devised by which the love and loyalty of the free human creatures toward their Creator could be demonstrated. The results of that test continue to directly touch your life, and mine.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned... (Rom. 5:12).



¹Donald E. Chittick, *The Controversy: Roots of the Creation-Evolution Conflict* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1984), p. 64.

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS*Notes:*

A. Original Man was created in the image of God (read Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7).

- 1. Adam, the first man, was not the product of "chance."**
- 2. Adam was not the outcome of "organic evolution."**
- 3. Adam was not the fictitious product of an "imaginative mind" (see Matt. 19:4; Luke 3:23-38 and compare Rom. 5:12ff; see also 1 Cor. 15:20-23, 45-49 and compare 1 Tim. 2:13).**

B. The original position of mankind (that is, Adam and Eve) was life, peace, prosperity, and fellowship with God (read carefully Gen. 1-2).

II. PREPARATORY READING

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the earth had yet sprung up; the LORD God had not sent rain on

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the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. And the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground— trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden, and from there it divided; it had four headstreams. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man

to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame (Gen. 2:4-25).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall present Man in his original, unspoiled environment: "It was very good."**
- B. We will show why a test was necessary for Man.**

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The two trees embodied God's provision and prohibition (refer to Gen. 2-3).**

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1. The trees were planted by God (see 2:9).
 2. The fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge" was not to be eaten (see 2:17).
 3. The "Tree of Knowledge" and its fruit were "pleasing to the eye" (see 2:9; compare 3:6).
 4. The Serpent (an embodiment of Satan) tempted the woman (see 3:1-6; compare Rev. 12:9).
 5. The penalty for eating the forbidden fruit had been clearly stated (see 2:17).
 6. The consequence was removal from the garden and God's fellowship (see 3:22-24).
- B. The two trees represented the probation and punishment of man (refer to Gen. 2-3).

1. The probation of man involved the Tree of Knowledge (see 2:16-17).
 - a. The *necessity* of the probation was that the worthiness of man (as God's image bearer and steward) must be proven by testing: Would man demonstrate love and loyalty toward his Creator by freely obeying His command?
 - b. The *means* of the probation was a single, simple prohibition: God allowed His human regents a maximum degree of freedom ("You are free to eat from any tree in the garden...") and forbade only the necessary minimum ("...but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...") (see Ps. 8; compare Heb. 2:6-8).
 - c. The *issues* of the probation were clearly defined as "life" and "death": "life" through humble, loving obedience, *or* "death" through selfish, faithless disobedience.

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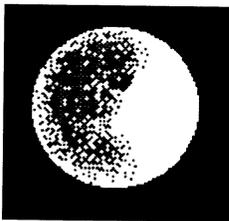
2. The punishment of man involved the Tree of Life: man was separated from God, his source of meaning and life (see 3:22-24; compare Rom. 5:12ff).

V. CONCLUSION

- A. The creation of Man is an historical fact.
- B. The original pair, Adam and Eve, had a good and perfect environment.
- C. The woman and the man made a personal, individual choice in disobeying God: They removed God from the throne of their hearts and enthroned "self" instead (read Matt. 22:37).
- D. Adam and Eve fell away from life and fellowship with God: *death entered into the world* (read Rom. 5:12ff; 1 Cor. 15:22).

17

*MAN'S REBELLION
AGAINST GOD*



*Through this historical
act of selfishness,
sin and death
entered into the world
and have, from that time
until now,
reigned over all
except Jesus Christ.*

MAN'S REBELLION AGAINST GOD



In the first chapter of his monumental Epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul paints a most unflattering spiritual portrait of the human race. He charges mankind with deliberate refusal to acknowledge the plain fact of its own creatureliness, and of trading revealed truth about the divine nature for transparent lies. He goes on to document the resulting degradation of a humanity that has lost its proper integration point—a degradation into which God Almighty will not prevent man from falling. Among the religions of the world, only the Judeo-Christian revelation presents a Deity whose glory is manifested by the *restraint* of His power rather than in the flaunting of it. It is this restraint of God's power that allows the peoples of the world to go their own self-

willed ways as they store up divine wrath against themselves.

How different is the portrait of human history painted by the modern secularist! How appealing to the collective human ego is the cosmic Myth of Man, the Master of the Universe, as summarized here by C.S. Lewis:

The play is preceded by the most austere of all preludes: the infinite void, and matter restlessly moving to bring forth it knows not what. Then, by the millionth chance—what tragic irony—the conditions at one point of space and time bubble up into that tiny fermentation which is the beginning of life. Everything seems to be against the infant hero of our drama—just as everything seems against the

youngest son or ill-used step-daughter at the opening of a fairy tale. But life somehow wins through. With infinite suffering, against all but insuperable obstacles, it spreads, it breeds, it complicates itself, from the amoeba up to the plant, up to the reptile, up to the mammal. We glance briefly at the age of monsters. Dragons prowl the earth, devour one another, and die. Then comes the theme of the younger son and the ugly duckling once more. As the weak, tiny spark of life began amidst the huge hostilities of the inanimate, so now again, amidst the beasts that are far larger and stronger than he, there comes forth a little naked, shivering, cowering creature, shuffling, not yet erect, promising nothing, the product of another millionth millionth chance. Yet some-

how, he thrives. He becomes the Cave Man with his club and his flints...cowering before the horrible gods whom he created in his own image. But these are only growing pains. Wait till the next act. There he is becoming true Man. He learns to master Nature. Science comes and dissipates the superstitions of his infancy.... See him in the last act, though not the last scene, of this great mystery. A race of demigods now rules the planet—and perhaps more than the planet—for eugenics have made certain that only demigods will be born, and psychoanalysis that none of them shall lose or smirch his divinity, and communism that all which divinity requires shall be ready to their hands. Man has ascended his throne.¹

And so the Bible's Cosmic Criminal becomes the Hero of the secular humanist myth. Could Carl Sagan have told the story any better? But neither the biblical account of the human condition, nor that of modern scientism, is offered as a mere "story." Both claim to be objectively and historically true accounts of the nature of man. It is evident that the two perspectives are mutually exclusive; no synthesis of the two is possible. Man cannot be both a falling star and a rising star at the same time, from the same vantage point. He cannot be both *evolving* and *devolving* if he came from any particular point of origin for any particular reason at all. If man's origin is chance and his ultimate destiny is (in the words of Bertrand Russell) "extinction in the vast death of the solar system," then mankind must be certainly progressing toward that goal. If man was originally created in the image of a God who designed him to share

in His own life and majesty, then man is certainly far off the track and is at risk of never reaching his appointed destiny.

Let the reader muster every available ounce of objectivity and personal integrity at his or her disposal, and choose between the two anthropologies on the basis of the evidence. But let the reader not fail to remember that the available evidence includes the appearance among men of a Bright Light that crucifixion, burial, and two thousand years of subsequent history have failed to extinguish, in spite of intense opposition by its enemies and episodes of utter folly by those who claim to be its friends.

That Jesus of Nazareth lived an extraordinary human life, made claims of divinity, suffered death under the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate, and was buried—all these are well established facts of history. The emptiness of the tomb on the third day following Jesus'

execution is an embarrassing historical problem, as well as a theological enigma, for all whose chosen cosmologies demand that human nature and deity cannot unite in one Person; that God cannot be one Essence consisting of three Persons; that human beings and their history answer to no superior transcendent authority; that no power in the universe can permanently thwart death; that Jesus of Nazareth cannot possibly be who He claimed to be! But for those of us who choose to let facts shape our cosmology (rather than the reverse), all kinds of illuminating possibilities open up. Our Lord Jesus Christ accepted the Old Testament, including the early chapters of Genesis, as a factual account of God's creation of man, man's rebellion from God, and God's redemptive intervention in human history. Jesus, and later His apostles, believed and taught that the divine purpose for mankind, for human history, and

for the entire universe are fully revealed in the Good News of His sinless life, reconciling death, and glorious resurrection. In becoming Christians, we not only receive salvation from sin and death, but also deliverance from delusion, deception, and despair.

We are back at our starting point: Paul's indictment of mankind as a species that deliberately discards the truth about God in order to pursue its own self-centered concerns. This darkening of human understanding sets the stage for accelerating moral degeneration which culminates in divine judgment. In the meanwhile, man deludes himself with fanciful myths of his own potential (or presumed) divinity, as if to convince himself that "every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better." To stand squarely against this popular mythology in order to bring God's saving truth into a decadent generation is a mission that can only

be accomplished in the power of
God's Spirit, who lives in His people.

*"If anyone would come after me, he
must deny himself and take up his
cross daily and follow me" (Luke
9:23).*



¹C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and
Other Addresses* (revised and expanded
edition), "Is Theology Poetry?" (New York
City, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company,
1980), pp. 79-80.

Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. Man's original position was one that allowed him to stand before God in innocence and holiness (read Gen. 2).
- B. The rebellion of man and its results are designated *the Fall*: man fell from his original relationship with God.
- C. The original rebellion of man continues, expressing itself in various ways.

II. PREPARATORY READING

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to

be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator— who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these things but also approve of those who practice them (Rom. 1:18-32).

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III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will see that mankind actually, historically rebelled against God and fell from original innocence and holiness.
- B. We will investigate the nature and cause of man's rebellion and fall.
- C. We will examine the biblically stated ramifications of man's sin: its *essence*; its *expression*; its *effect*.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Man's rebellion and fall are *factual* (read Gen. 3).
 - 1. The Fall is an *historical* fact (see Luke 3:38; compare Rom. 5:12; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; 1 Cor. 15:20-22; 2 Cor. 11:3; Matt. 19:4).
 - 2. The Fall is a *scriptural* fact (see Rom. 8:18-23, especially noting v. 20).

3. The Fall is an *experienced* fact (see Rom. 3:10, 23; 7:7-11; James 1:13-16).

B. Man's rebellious fall was caused by *sin* (read Rom. 5:12ff).

1. Sin in *essence* is *selfishness* (see Gen. 3; compare Matt. 22:34-40; Luke 9:23; 14:25-33; Gal. 2:20; James 1:13-16; 4:1-3).

2. Sin in *example* is

a. A *principle* of opposition to God (see Rom. 1:20-21; 2 Thess. 2:4)

b. A *state* of unlikeness to God (see Matt. 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15; compare Gen. 1:27)

c. An *act* of transgressing God's holy law (see Matt. 5:17ff; James 2:8-11; compare 1 John 3:4)

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3. Sin in *expression* is

- a. *Failure*: The Greek word *hamartia* means "to miss the mark; to miss a road; to miss one's purposes and plans"
- b. *Lawlessness/Iniquity*: The Greek word *anomia* means "without [re-gard for] law," implying disrespect for God's authority (see 1 John 3:4; compare Rom. 6:19; Titus 2:14)
- c. *Unrighteousness*: The Greek word *adikia* means "without righteousness," indicating the violation of right relationships (see 1 John 5:17; compare 2 Thess. 2:10-12)

4. Sin in *effect*

- a. *Deceives* our minds (see Heb. 3:13; compare Rev. 12:9)
- b. *Hardens* our hearts (see Heb. 3:13; compare Eph. 4:17-19)

c. *Kills* both body and spirit (see Rom. 6:23 and compare Rom. 7:7-14; James 1:13-16; also, 1 Cor. 15:22 and compare Gen. 5:5, 8, 10, 14, 17, 20; finally, Rom. 5:12 and compare Eph. 2:1-4; Col. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:6)

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V. CONCLUSION

A. Sin is an enormous outrage against God.

1. It *defies* His holiness (read 1 Peter 1:15).
2. It *dares* His justice (read Heb. 12:29).
3. It *despises* His goodness (read Rom. 2:4).
4. It *diverts* His grace (read Jude 4).

B. Sin dominates, debases, and destroys man: sin is "utterly sinful" (see Rom. 7:13).

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1. It *shackles* man (read John 8:34).
 2. It *soils* man (read James 1:27; Jude 23).
 3. It *scars* man (read 1 Tim. 4:2).
 4. It *separates* man from God (read John 8:21; compare Isa. 59:1-2).
- C. Sin is mankind's biggest problem.
1. It is *universal* in scope (read Rom. 3:23; compare 1 John 1:8; Gal. 3:22).
 2. It is *super-powerful* in strength (read Rom. 5:21; 6:14; 7:17, 20, 23; compare John 8:34-35; Rom. 6:6, 17).
- D. Sinful, rebellious mankind needs redemption from sin.
1. The rebellion of Adam was a selfish act (choice) against God which resulted in man's fall and death: separation from God.

2. Through this historical act of selfishness, sin and death entered the world and have, from that time until now, been victorious over all except Jesus Christ.

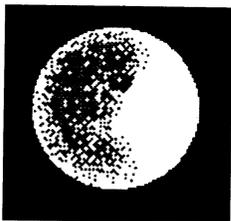
3. By the historical act of righteousness performed by Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross, all who will can be reconciled to God, the Source of righteousness and life.

E. Sin's power over mankind is broken by the power of "Christ and Him crucified," risen, and glorified (see 1 Cor. 15:1-4; compare 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:56-57).

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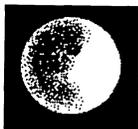
18

*MAN'S NEED:
RIGHTEOUSNESS*



The meaning of righteousness:

*“The quality of being
which fulfills
the claims of right
and makes
a moral being
what he should be.”*



Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer reminded the present generation of a crucial concept that mankind seems to be continually forgetting to its own detriment: *Ideas have consequences*. In his penetrating analysis of the rise and decline of Western civilization, *How Should We Then Live*, Schaeffer pointed out that the reason the streets are unsafe at night in modern cities is not because of any external danger, but because of what has been going on *inside* the heads of our citizens. A steady mental diet of pornography, secularized classroom studies, moronic television sitcoms, violent crime dramas, nihilistic art, and “head banging” music are beginning to yield the harvest we all ought to have expected: widespread domestic violence, venereal disease,

drug abuse, incest, serial murder, child pornography, rape, ritual human sacrifice, gang wars, lawsuits, illiteracy, and so on. Words such as “sin,” “right,” “wrong,” “deviant,” and “perverse” have become practically obsolete.

Is anyone in serious doubt that our culture has lost its way, that it has fallen off the track of Judeo-Christian truth on which it once rode? The forces of secular humanism have shaken the earth, opening a black canyon of moral relativism and social chaos into which Western civilization is slipping. From the far side of that canyon, the words are still ringing out that could support the ground under our feet and prevent us from sliding into a pit that will make the Dark Ages seem like the Enlightenment by comparison:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights....

Whether or not one agrees with the Declaration's assertion that we must base human rights and dignity on an intuitive recognition of a transcendent Creator (a statement reflecting the uneasy marriage of Judeo-Christian thought and Enlightenment deism among the Founding Fathers), it is beyond dispute that an erosion of political freedom closely follows an erosion of religious faith. Human rights and social order are fragile commodities; they require divine support to guarantee their survival. Unless human life has an absolute value and moral virtue an absolute basis, there can be no meaning in words like "justice" and "human rights." In such a situation, there can be no distinction between what people *can*

do, and what they *will* do. The stage is set for social breakdown, the reign of terror, and the atrocities of tyranny.

Men and women desperately need a solid foundation on which to base their lives, both individually and collectively. "Right" cannot be simply defined as "the majority vote of that nation that could lick all others," as Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes is reported to have suggested. Nor can the formula proposed by the Marquis de Sade form the basis for a well-adjusted individual and a just society: "Whatever is, is right." This is the kind of thinking that comes to fruition in the madness of a Manson, the horrors of a Hitler.

Few of the world's religious systems have even begun to connect the concepts of power and righteousness. Pagan deities like those of the ancient Greeks were considered too exalted to be concerned with petty human hang-ups

like morals and ethics. Such trivialities were thought better left to the philosophers. The pantheism of the Eastern mystics disallows any final distinction between good and evil, between cruelty and kindness, or even between a man and a rock. There can be no moral distinctions without a personal standard, and no moral absolutes apart from an infinite, universal standard.

Biblical revelation offers us everything we need as a fallen, sinful race. Scripture presents a personal God who made mankind in His own image to live in a personal relationship with Himself. His moral character is the standard of righteousness to which each man and woman must conform—a standard which has been propositionally defined in divine law, personally embodied in the incarnation of God in Christ, and authentically proclaimed in the ministry of the apostles. But this inflexible, universal standard of righteousness

which man so desperately needs if he is to have meaning and direction in life is also the thing which he most painfully dreads, for in his heart of hearts he knows that he cannot look at the face of God and live. He falls short of the glory of God, and instinctively covers his eyes in a vain attempt to hide from the heavenly Light which exposes him for the arrogant rebel he is. Sinful man rightly fears the prospect of exposure to the impartial, searching judgment of an absolutely Righteous Judge.

However, certain sons of Adam and daughters of Eve are weary of the daily strain of dodging the divine searchlight. They are ready to emerge from among the trees where they have been hiding from the presence of God; they are longing to see that Light, even if it should kill them. And, make no mistake, the Light *will* kill the hypocritical self-centeredness of everyone who dares to approach it, even

as it causes the New Man to sprout and grow within them:

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God (John 3:20-21).

The person who comes into the light tastes of the righteousness of God, and gives God all the glory for the new life he enjoys. He knows that, but for the undeserved kindness of God, he would have known nothing of real meaning, fulfillment, and joy throughout all eternity. The Good News about God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ has shown him how God can maintain His absolute standard of righteousness without compromise, and yet completely save a person as wretched as himself. Such a person knows that he has a message that

speaks to the deepest need of every human being in the world:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. Man, having rebelled against God in unrighteousness, stands in need of righteousness (read Rom. 1:16-17; compare Phil. 3:6-9).
- B. Man's need is not *self-righteousness* (by means of self-effort), but "*the righteousness of God*" (read Matt. 5:20; Rom. 10:1-4; compare Gal. 2:20; Rom. 4:14-15).

II. PREPARATORY READING

What shall we conclude then? Are we [Jews] any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their

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eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law (Rom. 3:9-31).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall declare sinful mankind's immediate need: Jesus Christ and His righteousness (read 1 Cor. 1:30; compare 2 Peter 1:1).
- B. We shall present the biblical doctrine regarding the "righteousness of God."

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The term *righteous(ness)* as used in the New Testament means
 - 1. *Basically, "the character or quality of being right or just"*
 - a. It is the state of being into which one enters upon being *justified* (from same Greek word group, *dikaiois*).
 - b. God's declaring of one to be "righteous" is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (see Rom. 3:21-4:25).

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2. *Specifically* (by definition and usage),
*"the quality of being which fulfills the
claims of right and makes a moral
being what he should be"*

a. Regarding God, righteousness
describes His absolute moral
perfection: *He is the standard of
righteousness* (see 1 Peter 1:16;
1 John 1:5).

b. Regarding man, righteousness is
God's standard for human charac-
ter and conduct, and is God's gift
to man by His grace, to be received
by man's obedient faith in Jesus
Christ, the Lord (see 1 Cor. 1:30;
compare Matt. 5:20, 48).

B. The righteousness of God is

1. *Revealed righteousness* (read Rom.
1:16-17)

a. It is revealed in the gospel of Jesus
Christ (see Rom. 1:16-17; also
compare 1 Cor. 15:1-4 with
2 Thess. 2:14).

- b. It is to this righteousness that the Old Testament ("Law and Prophets") bore witness (see Rom. 3:21; compare Rom. 1:1-5; Luke 24:44-48).
 - c. It is at the cross of Christ that God's righteousness finds its clearest and greatest expression (see Rom. 3:25-26).
2. *Apart from law* (read Rom. 3:21; compare Rom. 9:30-10:7; Titus 3:4-7)
3. *The "gift of righteousness"* (read Rom. 5:15-17)
- a. The word "reckon" ("credit," NIV) means "to place to one's account or credit" (see Rom. 4:3-4).
 - b. The word "grace" means "favor that is freely and undeservedly bestowed out of the sheer generosity of the giver [God]" (see Rom. 11:6; compare Eph. 2:1-10).

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- c. Paul's explicit statement means that any attempt to merit or earn God's righteousness by legalistic works nullifies the meaning and necessity of Christ's death (read carefully Gal. 2:20-21).
- 4. *Received through faith in Jesus Christ* (read Rom. 3:21-26; 4:24-25 and compare 10:1-4, 10-16)
- 5. *That which brings eternal life* (read Rom. 5:21; 6:23 and compare 8:1-2)
- 6. *God's required standard of character and conduct to be expressed in the Christian lifestyle*
 - a. Why? Because we died with Christ when we obeyed His gospel (see Rom. 6).
 - b. How? It is a position attained by trusting in Christ and a practice maintained by setting our minds on spiritual things (see Rom. 8:1-11; compare Phil. 3:3-21; 4:4-9; Col. 3:1ff).

7. *The basis of judgment upon the disobedient and unrighteous* (read Rom. 1:18; compare Rom. 2:5-16; Acts 17:31)

V. CONCLUSION

A. The righteousness of God: What volumes it speaks!

1. No man or woman can achieve it, yet all must attain it if they are to be saved from the fierce blast of God's righteous wrath.
2. It is a righteousness that has been unveiled in human history and stands utterly apart from any system of human religion or legal works.
3. It is freely given by God's grace to all who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
4. It brings eternal life into the present and requires a daily response of

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righteousness in the lives of those who believe.

5. It reveals the righteous wrath of God against all who, like unbelieving self-righteous Israel, refuse and reject the righteousness of God.

B. Divine justice declares that the unrighteous must pay a holy law's demand: perfect righteousness, without flaw.

1. On a purely human basis this is impossible, for "there is no one righteous, not even one" (read Rom. 3:9ff).

2. The love of God, for whom all things are possible, found a way to uphold His own perfect righteousness and, at the same time, justify sinners (read Rom. 3:26).

3. The ultimate demonstration of the righteousness of God is the cross of Christ: the Righteous Judge spared

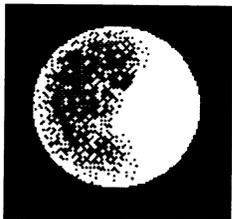
not His own Son (read Rom. 3:25; 8:32; compare 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 2:20-21).

4. In Jesus and His cross are revealed the grounds on which we, the unrighteous, may be declared righteous (justified) by the True and Righteous God of heaven and earth!

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19

*MAN'S NEED:
PROPITIATION*



*The Word is clear:
Either the Son of God
dies for sinners
or else the wrath of God
is visited upon them.
He died that we
might not die.*



The doctrine of the Atonement has been a matter of lively debate (and sometimes heated controversy) among Christians since the close of the apostolic age. Unlike such matters as the nature of Christ and of the Godhead, the doctrine of the Atonement was never finally and formally fixed in a creed, confession of faith, or church council edict. What God accomplished in Christ's death for the human race has been described by various analogies throughout church history, beginning in the New Testament itself. We read of Christ's dying "for" us—that is, He died on our behalf:

He was delivered over to death for our sins... (Rom. 4:25; compare 1 Cor. 15:3).

...While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8; compare Rom. 5:6; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2).

By understanding the death of Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of the Jewish sacrificial system, the New Testament writers saw the Atonement not only as a *representative* work, but also as a *substitutionary* work. What ought to happen to us, in some sense fell upon Christ in His death:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Gal. 3:13; compare 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:9; 1 Peter 2:24).

All true Christians are convinced of the objective value and meaning of the death of Christ; it was no mere example, exhibition,

or accident. It was a deliberately planned divine act through which God and mankind were reconciled in a way that *no other means could have accomplished*. The disagreement among Christians about the Atonement centers on the meaning of a certain biblical word which is used to describe it: *hilasterion*, from the Greek root *hilasmos*. This term is sometimes translated "propitiation," and sometimes "expiation." The main issue in the debate is not really about which word to use; the issue is whether the *object* of "hilasmos" is God (whose wrath is quenched by *appeasement*, according to "propitiation" advocates) or human sin (which is *removed* or *wiped away*, according to those who favor "expiation"). Is "hilasmos" done to God, or to sin?

Certainly, we must be careful not to gloss over such an important matter. Atonement is a concept capable of the highest and most noble explanation, but it is also

susceptible to the lowest and crudest misrepresentation. God is not a sinful man, that He should be portrayed as a blood-thirsty tyrant seeking vengeance on those who have slighted Him. He is not concerned to have His "pound of flesh." But neither is He a senile old grandfather, rocking in His celestial chair, unable to be moved by human sins and sufferings. Can a God who is Love sit idly by while His good work is destroyed by those who despise every right way? Can absolute Goodness be indifferent to wickedness and injustice?

In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the word *hilasterion* always refers to the "mercy seat" where, according to the law of Moses, the High Priest was to meet with God once every year to offer the atoning blood of the animal sacrifice on behalf of the nation of Israel. Speaking to Moses concerning the appointed Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), God said:

"...I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover [mercy seat].... [Aaron] 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.... 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" (Lev. 16:2, 14, 30).

According to the apostle Paul, the atoning sacrifice and ritual that took place on the Day of Atonement were fulfilled by Jesus Christ at the cross, where God dealt with human guilt at a certain point of space and time. Christ is our "mercy seat"; He Himself is the meeting place of God's mercy and our sins, where forgiveness is obtained through the sacrificial death of the innocent Victim, Christ:

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement [hilasterion, mercy seat], through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice,

because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:25-26).

Whatever the Atonement is, it is definitely not some human achievement whereby men and women satisfy the requirements of God for salvation. God Himself provided the atoning sacrifice that removed the barrier of sin between God and man. Was the cross of Christ an exhibition of God's anger at sin, or of God's love for man? There is no need to choose between the two. At Calvary, God said a clear "yes" to the human race, and an equally clear "no" to its deadly moral pollution, sin. God did not need to be coaxed into an attitude of forgiveness, as in paganism. Any parent can understand how one can be *angry* at a child's conduct, and yet never cease for a moment to

love the child. God freely and willingly provided what was necessary to satisfy the claims of divine justice and to exhibit the glory of divine love.

For all of its fathomless majesty, the Atonement is easy to understand on the level of personal relationships. Most of us have had the experience of forgiving offenses against ourselves, committed by someone we love. Does forgiveness ever really happen without pain, without suffering a kind of death in which the cost of the other's sin is absorbed into one's own heart? And what do we suppose was happening on that cross where the Son of God hung?

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Notes:

A. Because God is God, He reacts in the strongest manner to sin wherever it is found: His disposition and response toward evil is the biblical concept of divine *wrath*.

B. Because God is God, His response to sin is not only wrath: He is a merciful and loving God.

1. God will forgive sinful human beings.

2. *Propitiation* (variously defined as *appeasement, satisfaction, atonement*) is the expression of God's disposition toward lost, sinful human beings.

II. PREPARATORY READING

God presented him [Christ Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished...(Rom. 3:25).

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For this reason he [Jesus] had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17).

He [Jesus Christ] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.... This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 2:2; 4:10).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will study the New Testament passages that speak of propitiation and see that propitiation is needed because of God's righteous judgment against sin (read Rom. 11:22).

- B. We will consider that the wrath of God shows the serious nature of sin: where there is sin, there must be wrath.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The wrath of God is an awesome reality.
 - 1. Propitiation is needed because of

God's righteous judgment against sin.

- a. The wrath of God is *real* (see 1 Cor. 10:5-11; Heb. 10:30-31; 12:29; Rev. 14:18-20; 16:19; 19:15).
 - b. The wrath of God is *righteous* (see Rom. 1:18; 2:1-16; Rev. 16:5-7).
2. To think seriously of propitiation, one must first think seriously of God's wrath (read Ps. 7:11).
- a. As a moral being, God directs His righteous indignation toward wrongdoing in *any* form (see John 3:36; also, compare Eph. 5:6 with Col. 3:6; see also Rom. 2:5; 3:5; 5:9 and compare 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16).
 - b. God's wrath is not an irrational, uncontrollable fit of anger; it is a settled disposition of antagonism toward all that opposes His own perfect nature and will (see John 3:36).

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c. God's wrath is the stern response of His holy nature towards all wickedness, sinfulness, evil, deception, and falsehood; it will be visited upon sin wherever it is found— even on God's only begotten Son, the sin bearer for the world (see 2 Cor. 5:20-21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 2:9ff; 1 Peter 2:21-25; compare Rom. 8:3-4, 32).

d. God's wrath is a response of *love*— a love so zealous for righteousness and truth that it blazes forth in fiery retribution against all that is harmful and destructive (see Rom. 1:18ff; Heb. 12:29; compare Rev. 3:19).

e. The biblical spokesmen of both Testaments (including Jesus Himself) know nothing of a "love" that does not strongly oppose sin.

B. The propitiation offered by God is an urgent necessity for man.

1. *Propitiation* is that means provided by God whereby sinful men and women can be saved from “the wrath to come” (see Rom. 2:5-11; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; compare 2 Thess. 1:5-10).
2. Biblical propitiation has no element of the pagan concept of “bribing the gods,” since God Himself provides the propitiation (see Rom. 3:25; 1 John 4:10).
3. God set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation (see Rom. 3:21-26).
 - a. Remember: *all* are “under law” and therefore under the judgment of God for their sins (read Rom. 3:9, 19).
 - b. Jesus Christ, through the shedding of His blood, has provided a satisfactory offering for human guilt: *propitiation*.

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- c. Those who accept God's graciously offered redemption in Christ Jesus are cleansed of their sins by this blood; they are justified by faith and no longer condemned for their sins (read Rom. 8:1).
 - d. All sinners were under the terrifying consequences of God's wrath, but Christ Jesus has suffered the wrath in the sinner's place (read Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; compare Rom. 5:1-11).
4. This propitiation is made by God in Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Heb. 2:17; compare 1 John 2:2; 4:9-10).
- a. Selfishness, crime (transgression), and guilt mean that a debt must be paid: the offence (sin) against God must be righted.
 - b. Moral offence requires appeasement and forgiveness: the Offended One (God) must be satisfied.

- c. The reality of offenses and One offended means that either penalty or pardon must come to the offender (sinner).
- d. A sacrifice was made so that propitiation might be effected: the Offering was Jesus.
- e. Jesus died so that we might not ultimately die (read Rom. 5:8-9; compare 1 John 4:10).

V. CONCLUSION

- A. *What propitiation accomplished:* God was able
 - 1. To forgive sins while upholding His perfect righteousness
 - 2. To reckon penitent sinners righteous through the obedience of faith without compromising His absolute justice

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3. To provide the means, in Christ Jesus, whereby sinners may come into the presence of God without fear of His consuming wrath— as justified, reconciled, and redeemed saints

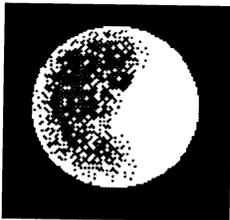
B. *What it means to be without Jesus:* Man stands condemned.

1. God's wrath is plain: His righteous wrath will be poured out upon the wrongdoer in all its fury, with all its painful consequences.

2. God's word is clear: Either the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is accepted as an offering for sinners, or else the wrath of God is visited on them.

20

*MAN'S NEED:
REDEMPTION*



*The cost of redemption
was priceless:
instead of our death,
His crucifixion;
instead of our bondage,
His blood.*



*You may be an
ambassador
to England or France.
You may like to gamble,
you might like to dance.
You may be the heavy-weight
champion of the world.
You may be a socialite
with a long string of pearls.¹*

So begins the unrelenting and rather lengthy musical sermon, *Gotta Serve Somebody*, in which Bob Dylan drives home the simple but profound thesis that he states so succinctly in the song's title. It is an inescapable fact of human existence that each one of us must choose to serve a spiritual master, and that ultimately there are but the two options which Dylan's song sets before us: "the devil or the Lord." Interestingly, one of the most basic points of Christian theology

is that "God is love." Conversely, His arch-foe must be the antithesis of love: selfishness and egocentricity—qualities that (according to the Bible) originate in the fallen angel, Satan. It is doubtful whether Jesus would have endorsed this understanding as He did if there were any better explanation for the problem of evil. So, to be human is to be that moral entity who must choose between God's life principle (love) and Satan's (self-centeredness).

Again, the Bible rings true with our daily experience in telling us that each accountable human being has chosen to leave God's way, and to go Satan's:

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own
way...(Isa. 53:6).*

*"There is no one righteous, not even
one: there is no one who under-*

stands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:10-11).

When the standard of righteousness is Perfect Love, all of us must confess that we fail the test. Somewhere along the way, we decided to go the way of Adam, and of Satan before him— to be a law unto ourselves, rather than to submit to the kingdom of God. The demons wouldn't stay where God had placed them; Adam and Eve wouldn't forego what God had forbidden them— and neither would we:

For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died (Rom. 7:7-9).

"Sin sprang to life and I died." I lost moral innocence before God; I violated the standard imposed by Perfect Love, and lost my place in His Kingdom. And— assuming that you are of sufficient maturity to grasp the concepts presented thus far— so did you. To excuse our own spiritual downfall as a congenital defect conferred upon us by the sin of our first parents is to ignore the point that the most horrifying aspect of our inherited "family illness" is its voluntary nature: it is as much chosen by us as imposed upon us. We are not merely victims of circumstance; we have deliberately sold ourselves into bondage to the household of Satan, and the family business is sin.

Not every son or daughter of Satan gets to labor in the more celebrated aspects of the family business. Not everyone is cut out to be a mass murderer, a cruel tyrant, a "porn queen," or even a religious

hypocrite. Apparently, there is more room at the bottom of hell than at the top, but it doesn't really matter how notoriously vile a slave of sin may be: when one is slaving in the service of sin, his wages must be eternal death.

On the other hand, there may be a distinct advantage in slaving at hell's most despicable levels, rather than in perdition's chief seats and places of honor. After all, tax collectors and prostitutes are able to get out of the grip of hell and into the kingdom of God with far greater ease than any self-righteous hypocrite. This is not because a "lowlife," as such, is more worthy than his more respectable colleagues, but because a man who cannot deny that he is sick is most apt to go to the physician for a cure.

...Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's

descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:31-36).

Never enslaved to anyone? Had they forgotten, in their sanctimonious arrogance, that their nation had been conceived in slavery, and had come to birth only because of a mighty deliverance wrought by a loyal and merciful God?

The LORD did not set his affection on you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, King of Egypt (Deut. 7:7-8; compare Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Deut. 15:15; 16:12).

And what of ourselves? Are we, like the unbelieving Jews of old, laboring under a mere illusion of freedom? How difficult it is for modern secular man to admit that he lives in a culture that is enslaved to material affluence, selfish ambition and greed, anxiety and faithlessness, power lust and pleasure seeking. How humiliating it is to come to terms with the fact that I am personally enmeshed in the sin of the world around me, and am powerless to extricate myself from the web of self-centeredness that binds me ever more tightly with every maneuver by which I try to free myself. If it took the dramatic intervention of God to free Israel from bondage in Egypt, could it take less than a redeeming act of God to release me from the tyranny of sin and the terror of eternal death?

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rom. 7:24-25).



¹Bob Dylan, *Gotta Serve Somebody* (NY: Special Rider Music [Warner Bros. Publications, Inc.], 1979).

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. Redemption means, *"to loose; loosen; to buy back; to release on payment of ransom"* (read Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).

B. Redemption, as presented in the New Testament, portrays Jesus Christ the Redeemer coming into the slave market of this world to pay the purchase price for all persons, redeeming them by His blood (read Rom. 3:24).

II. PREPARATORY READING

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey— whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which

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leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:13-23).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We want to realize the significance of redemption in Christ as the fulfillment of man's greatest need, noting that it is according to God's eternal purpose.

B. We want to deepen our love and appreciation for this redemption which is freely offered to all people in Christ Jesus.

IV. OUTLINE

A. Redemption is man's need.

1. Man is *under* the dominion of *sin* (see Rom. 6:14; 7:14; John 8:34, 36).
2. Man is *under* the curse of the *law* (see Rom. 6:14-17; Gal. 3:10-14; compare Gal. 4:4-5).
3. Man is *under* the judgment of God's *wrath* (see Rom. 1:18; 2:1-11; 3:19; 5:9 and compare John 3:36; see also 1 Thess. 1:10 and compare 2 Thess. 1:5-12).
4. Man is *under* the sentence of *death* (see Rom. 6:23).

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B. Redemption is God's provision for man's need.

1. *Jesus is man's divinely provided Redeemer* (see 1 Peter 1:18-20 and compare Rev. 5:9-10 with Rev. 1:5; see also Acts 20:28).
2. *Jesus, man's Redeemer, paid the price to deliver man* (compare 1 Peter 1:18-20 with 2 Cor. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).
3. *Jesus, in paying the redemption price, ransoms man from sin, law, wrath, and death* (see John 8:36; Gal. 1:4; Rom. 7:24-8:3; compare 1 Cor. 15:55-58).
4. *Jesus, in ransoming sinful man, redeems him from slavery to sin and saves him to do his new Master's will* (see Rom. 6).
5. *Jesus' ransoming work is of such completeness and finality that it is described as eternal redemption* (see Heb. 9:11-12).

V. CONCLUSION*Notes:*

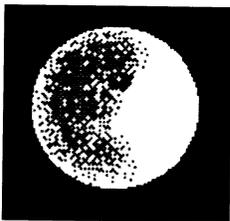
- A. The *Christ* of our redemption is Jesus of Nazareth (read 1 Cor. 1:30).
- B. The *cost* of our redemption was priceless (read 1 Peter 1 :18-20; compare Rom. 3:24 and Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).
1. Instead of our death, there was His crucifixion (read 2 Cor. 5:20-21; compare 1 Peter 2:20-24).
 2. Instead of our bondage, there is His blood.
- C. The *confidence* of our redemption is God's own seal and deposit which guarantees our hope (read Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:20-22; 5:5; compare Rom. 8:23).
- D. The *consequence* of our redemption is divine sonship (read Gal. 4:5; compare Rom. 8:9-21).

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E. The *completeness* of redemption depends on Christ's work (read Mark 10:45; Titus 2:14; compare Rom. 8:23; Heb. 9:11-12, 24-28; 10:1-18).

21

*MAN'S NEED:
RECONCILIATION*



*God was reconciling
the world to himself
in Christ,
not counting men's sins
against them.
And he has
committed to us
the message of
reconciliation
(2 Corinthians 5:19).*



In the latter half of the twentieth century, it has become chic to speak of man's "alienation."

Philosophers and conservationists tell us that man is alienated from his cosmic environment. Psychologists find that man is separated from his own psyche. Sociologists affirm that man is estranged from his fellowman. And, of course, religionists contend that man is at cross-purposes with God.

If the reader will forgive me one irresistible pun, I must note that of all religions, it is uniquely Christianity which insists that man's salvation depends on his being at "cross purposes" with God. The Bible, as the source of Christian teaching, asserts that the root of man's problem is sin. It is said that the original man and woman were seduced from a harmonious

and fulfilling relationship with God by the enticements of a deceptive spirit in serpent form. This primary alienation from God immediately resulted in the subordinate problems which the social, psychological, and environmental sciences have rightly identified. And (to clarify my "cross purposes" pun) the eternal purpose of God involves the reconciliation of sinful men and women to their Creator through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross.

Treatment of any ailment depends on right diagnosis. If we believe that man's desperate situation is the result of an evolutionary glitch, a genetic programming error, or an environmental deficiency, then the solutions we propose will tend to be merely psychological, political, or technological. Nor should we

necessarily be enamored with any solution that claims to be "spiritual," for if the Bible is correct, there are both good spirits and bad.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world (1 John 4:1-3).

A "spiritual" message of salvation is to be tested on the basis of its content: *What does it teach concerning Jesus of Nazareth?* How does Jesus Christ fit into its scheme? Is He central? Is He both fully divine and fully human? Has He come into this world from the Being of God to be born as a true man? Has He brought salvation by His death

on the cross for all who will believe in Him as risen Savior? A "spiritual" solution may be as naturalistic as the most atheistic materialism. The Bible presents a supernatural, transcendent Creator who is distinct from His creation, and yet is so infinitely loving and powerful as to act within the created universe for man's salvation. The mystical, pantheistic, and polytheistic religions of the world offer us only impersonal cosmic forces and "laws" which can neither love nor save man, for they are ultimately the same as man. To such religions (including New Age thought), Jesus can be thought of as avatar, angel, or guru, but never as the only begotten Son of God who reconciles man to God by His cross.

To be accurate, perhaps we should regard Christianity as something beyond religion, if by "religion" we mean man's attempts to seek God and win His favor. Authentic Christianity reveals a God

who seeks sinful man, as a good shepherd would leave ninety-nine secure sheep to find one lost. Jesus shows us a loving Father who forgets all concern for His own dignity as He joyously runs down a dusty road to embrace a prodigal son. Religion is all about man reaching up to God; Christianity is about God reaching down to man.

According to biblical revelation, when man fell and was expelled from the Garden of Eden, God placed cherubim and a flaming sword at the gate to prevent his return. Holiness and justice stood in man's way, barring his access to unending fellowship with God: eternal life. Through the incarnation of God in Christ, the natures of deity and humanity were brought together in one Person. By way of Christ's cross and resurrection, this reunion of God and man was sealed forever. God's requirement of absolute holiness and justice was satisfied; man's desperate need of

reconciliation to his Creator was fulfilled. Still, many attempt to take the kingdom of God by violent force through religious legalism, mysticism, and secular utopian schemes. It matters not what men may do or say; God has provided but one way of reconciliation for mankind: the cross of Christ.

The cross is a particularly appropriate symbol of God's solution to the human crisis: a vertical beam intersected by a horizontal, picturing the reconciliation of heaven and earth. Yet we must remember that the Bible never speaks of God being reconciled to man, but always of man being reconciled to God. It was man who turned away from God, and not vice versa. And this is true also on an individual level: I became God's enemy; He never stopped loving me. The problems of the human race, and my personal problems, began with a free decision to turn from God and to seek meaning by living

for self. The resolution of all human problems, including my own, involves a deliberate choice to turn back to God on the basis of the finished redemptive work of Christ on the cross, and to live henceforth as a follower of Christ. And here is the collision and the paradox at the heart of the cross:

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 10:35).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. Another of the great words in the New Testament related to the redeeming of man is *reconciliation*.

B. Simply defined, reconciliation means "the change from opposition to friendship" (read Rom. 5:8-11; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20-23; 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

II. PREPARATORY READING

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has

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gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God's fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 5:11-6:2).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall see that reconciliation is the restoration of a relationship: man needs to change from an enemy of God to a friend of God.

- B. We shall come to understand that Jesus Christ is the Reconciler for all people.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Romans 5:8-11 describes what God has done to meet our spiritual needs through

the death and resurrection of Christ,
His Son.

1. Man must be *reconciled* to God: "...we were God's enemies..." (v. 10).
2. Man must be reconciled to God *through the death of His Son* (v. 10).
3. Man must be reconciled to God through the death of His Son in order that he might *receive the reconciliation* (v. 11).

B. Ephesians 2:14-18 explains the work of Christ in reconciling people of all nations to God as members of one spiritual body (compare Col. 1:19-23).

1. Jesus' death provided the means of reconciling *both Jew and Gentile*: "...to reconcile both of them..." (v. 16).
2. This reconciliation of both Jew and Gentile was *in one body* (that is, the church) (v. 16).

Notes:

Notes:

3. This reconciling of all people was in one body to God (v. 16).
 4. Man must be reconciled in one body to God *through the cross* (v. 16).
- C. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 presents the gospel of Christ as the only adequate message by which mankind must be reconciled.
1. God reconciles man to Himself through Christ (v. 18).
 2. God gave the apostles the ministry and word (stewardship and message) of reconciliation (vv. 18, 19).
 3. God (in Christ) reconciles the world to Himself (v. 19).
 4. God entreats estranged, sinful mankind to be reconciled to Himself (vv. 20, 21).

V. CONCLUSION

Notes:

A. Reconciliation is that which God has done for man, which man could not have done for himself.

1. God provided the *Mediator* for man's reconciliation: *Jesus Christ* (see 1 Tim. 2:4-5; compare John 14:6).

2. God provided the *means* for man's reconciliation: *the cross* (see Col. 1:20-22).

3. God provided the *message* of reconciliation: *the gospel of "Christ crucified for sins"* (see 2 Cor. 5:20-6:2).

B. God has provided for man's greatest need: *reconciliation*.

1. Man can be reconciled and thus saved (found).

2. Or man can remain unreconciled, and thus unsaved (lost).

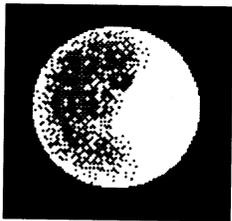
Notes:

C. Each human being is accountable to make peace with God: *"We implore you, be reconciled to God"* (NEB).

D. *"...now is the day of salvation"*
(2 Cor. 6:2).

22

*MAN'S NEED:
SALVATION*



*This great salvation
is a process:
It is freedom from the past,
victory over the present,
and assurance of the future.*



Most of us have experienced the frustration of having a better understanding of another person's real problems and needs than did that person himself (or herself). The stubbornness of a child who won't eat his vegetables or a friend who refuses to follow good advice can be most exasperating. Such experiences provide a glimpse, by way of analogy, of what must go on within the heart of God as He deals with those who are made in His image. For if we, being evil, know what is good for our children and can be grieved and angered at their obstinacy precisely because of the intensity of our love for them, what must the Father of our spirits feel when His offspring turn away from His revealed Word and spurn His every offer to save them?

The Bible, which has always claimed to be the Word of this living God, addresses lost, fallen human beings. It says without apology that all of us have sinned and stand in peril of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord, where there is only darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth. Modern people generally consider themselves too sophisticated to believe that any individual could be so significant as to have an eternal destiny of any kind. Believing thus, they do not attach great importance to their personal ethical decisions, and thus the stakes are raised daily: If the modern materialist is right, each day brings him closer to an oblivion which demands that he grab for ever-increasing amounts of gusto in the present; if he is wrong, each passing day brings him

closer to the judgment seat of Christ, where he will receive all the divine wrath he has been storing up. Meanwhile, God is pleading with mankind to accept salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners.

The only thing that God will allow man to contribute to the process of his own salvation is a willingness to believe in it:

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent" (John 6:28-29).

How anticlimactic! The multitudes had pursued Christ across the Sea of Galilee to learn what good works He would enjoin on them that they might commend themselves to God, and all He will allow them to do is trust in Himself! Surely (they must have thought) He will ascend some foreboding mountain,

bring down *at least* three tables of stone (did not Moses bring two?), and send us on a quest for righteousness, a crusade for good deeds and religious works that will put the Pharisees and even the Essenes to shame! But, no; all He wanted was their faith—not in their own works, but in Himself.

Yet, it was widely known that Christ challenged would-be followers with standards that made the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees seem like the ethics of the Gentiles. If they disallowed killing, He forbade even the hateful thought. If they demanded correct legal procedure in divorce, He denounced divorce altogether as a departure from the original intention of God. While they commended themselves for carefully avoiding physical defilement with women, He condemned their lustful hearts and flung the doors of the kingdom of God wide open for every prostitute and tax-collector who would turn

from sin. How could He seem to demand so much on the one hand, and yet so little on the other?

The evangelistic strategy of Jesus seemed calculated to encourage and woo the brokenhearted who despaired of ever earning a place in the kingdom of God, while tripping up those who were "confident of their own righteousness, and looked down on everybody else" (Luke 18:9ff). Those who claimed they could see were proven blind; the empty were filled and the well fed sent away empty. And the same divine grace that allowed the poor in spirit to enter salvation and to walk in its way would prove to be a stumblingblock and a scandal to the self-righteous.

Since the time when man first heeded the Serpent's seductive lie, it has been a human tendency to attempt godhood: to try to be god unto oneself. "I'd rather do it myself!" proclaimed a pathetic, headache-plagued housewife in a

television commercial several years ago, summing up perfectly the spirit of the age. Fallen man centers his existence on himself; he is too proud to submit to God. The gospel of Christ crucified for sins, risen, reigning, and returning implies that mankind has been operating on principles and presuppositions that are completely and monstrously wrong:

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's hidden wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:6-8).

There you have it: those who set themselves up as the ruling elite of this world haven't got a clue as to the real meaning of the historical

process they claim to be controlling. Every man and woman who assumes the position of God at the center of life hasn't really the vaguest notion of how a human life is supposed to be lived. Yet our blindness remains because we claim to see, and judge other people by standards that we ourselves do not keep.

We might think we need health and wealth above all else. We might be convinced that our salvation will be realized in things economic or political. And truly, salvation that doesn't result in a more abundant realization of life somewhere along the line cannot be salvation at all. But the salvation that God offers is immediately and primarily concerned with man's deliverance from sin. Sin is that element which constricts his existence, narrowing his interests down to only self and its insurgent kingdom. The word "salvation," traced back to its Hebrew roots, means

"to be wide, spacious; to develop without hindrance"—hence, to be delivered from danger or to have victory in battle.¹ Sin threatens the life of man; it separates him from the divine Source of his life and ultimately kills him. Death is hardly separable from sin in the Bible, for unless God graciously imposes a higher law over the "law of sin and death," the end of the process of sin *must* be death:

...but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death (James 1:14-15).

Throughout the biblical revelation, there sounds a distinctive note of God's grace in dealing with man. The initiative is always on God's side in entering into covenant with man, in fulfilling promises, in giving blessings and

gifts. Man can lay no legal claim to anything from God except condemnation for sin. God promises and warns; He patiently relents; He finally acts in righteous judgment and redemption. The cycle is repeated again and again in the tribal federation of Israel, in the Davidic dynasty and in the post-exilic remnant. But the ultimate fulfillment of the salvation promised by God is not seen in the Exodus, nor in the return from Exile, nor in the Maccabean dynasty. It is fulfilled in the deliverance from sin and death accomplished by God in the Person of His Son, Jesus, whose very name means "Yahweh Is Salvation." In Christ, God reveals Himself as the Savior of mankind in a sense more profound than was ever imagined, even by the prophets who spoke by the Spirit of God. In Jesus, we see a God who saves man from sin by taking its deadly sting into Himself.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently, and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things (1 Peter 1:10-12).



¹F. J. Taylor, "Save," *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. by Alan Richardson (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1950), pp. 219-220.

Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. This word (*salvation*) demands and deserves most careful consideration and thoughtful study; it represents the mission of the Savior and also the purpose and plan of God (read 1 Tim. 1:15; compare Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10).

B. Therefore, it is vital for us to know what God's revealed Word has to say about salvation, for it is the only remedy for sin: *Without salvation, man is helplessly and hopelessly lost.*

II. PREPARATORY READING

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:4-7).

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will seek to understand the greatness of this salvation from sin that God has purposed for mankind.
- B. We want to realize that Jesus of Nazareth is the divinely predetermined and purposed Savior, and mankind's only hope for being saved from the destruction caused by sin.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. *Salvation* is God's desire for all men and women (read 1 Tim. 2:4-5; compare 2 Peter 3:8-9).
- B. *Salvation* is God's design for lost humanity (read 2 Tim. 1:9; compare John 3:14-16, 36).
- C. *Salvation* is the message proclaimed in God's Good News, the gospel of Christ (read Rom. 1:16; compare Acts 13:26; Eph. 1:13).

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D. *Salvation* is the way of the Good News (read Acts 16:17; compare John 14:6).

E. *Salvation* is the power of the Good News (read Rom. 1:16-17; compare 1 Cor. 1:18).

F. *Salvation* is the urgent plea of the Good News (read 2 Cor. 6:2).

G. *Salvation* is the offer of God exclusively in Christ Jesus (read Acts 4:12; compare Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:25; 2 Tim. 2:10).

V. CONCLUSION

A. This great salvation is provided by God according to His purpose and grace (read 2 Tim. 1:9; compare Titus 3:3-8 with Eph. 2:1-10 and 1 Peter 1:9-18).

B. This great salvation saves us from ruination and damnation.

1. Salvation is *from* life's perversion and corruption (see Acts 2:40, compare 2 Peter 1:3-4).

2. Salvation is *from* life's meaninglessness and futility (see Luke 19:10; compare Matt. 18:11; see also 1 Peter 1:14, 18).
3. Salvation is *from* sin/selfishness (see Matt. 1:21; Gal. 1:4; compare Rom. 8:1-3).
 - a. We can be saved from the *penalty* of sin/selfishness.
 - b. We can be saved from the *power* of sin/selfishness.
 - c. We can be saved from the *presence* of sin/selfishness.
- C. This great salvation is a process, and not merely an event: It is from baptism *unto* eternal glory (read carefully 2 Thess. 2:13 and compare 1 Peter 1:3-9; compare also 2 Peter 1:1-11; Rom. 13:11).
 1. It is *freedom* from the past (see Acts 2:38; compare 2 Tim. 1:9).

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2. It is *victory* over the present (see 1 Cor. 1:18; compare 2 Cor. 6:2).

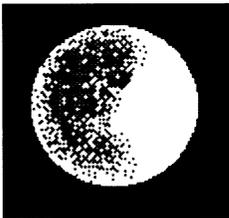
3. It is *assurance* of the future (see 1 Peter 1:5; compare Rom. 13:11).

D. This great salvation concerns those in Christ Jesus and His church (read Eph. 5:22ff).

E. This great salvation can be neglected, forfeited, and lost (read Heb. 2:3; 3:14-16; compare 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Col. 1:23; see also Rom. 5:9; Heb. 7:25).

23

*MAN'S NEED:
SANCTIFICATION*



*Sanctification is absolutely
essential for
fellowship and communion
with the Lord God.*

MAN'S NEED: SANCTIFICATION



Ask the already over-worked “man in the street” to explain to you what he knows about computer software, microchips, and megabytes, and chances are good that he will have something to offer you for your trouble. But if you were to ask him about a theological term such as ‘sanctification,’ you would probably get only a blank stare that would make you wonder whether your question had caused some sort of cerebral glitch in the poor fellow. People will gladly invest their time and effort to learn about something that will benefit their lives in the “here and now.” As much as Christians may rightly deplore the secular mindset that denies the value and relevance of the transcendent, let us frankly acknowledge that we have often appeared to be “too heavenly minded

to be any earthly good.” Yet, spiritual things have temporal, as well as eternal, value:

For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come (1 Tim. 4:8).

Our poor “man in the street” would be appreciative if the theologians would stop talking to themselves in their intimidating technical jargon, and would address themselves to the needs and concerns of the rest of mankind. While the miracles of Pentecost and the utopian bliss of the ‘eschatological kingdom’ may be the normal waking reality enjoyed by a chosen few, most of us live down here on earth, where life is not yet entirely as it is in heaven. The Christian would therefore do a great service

to his fellowman if he would apply himself to learning how Christian theology relates to human life in the present world, and would then demonstrate this for his neighbors. Of course, the traditional Christian works of charity and benevolence would continue—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoners, and so on—but with the renewed zeal and deep commitment of those who have just heard Christ's story of the Good Samaritan for the first time. And the love of Christ within the Christian community—the absolutely color-blind, race-disregarding, class-nullifying quality of fellowship that existed in many apostolic churches—would likewise be rekindled. But beyond these specific examples of theology in action, there would be among God's people an undeniable sense of mission and purpose which would make each Christian a living epistle of Christ, a walking embodiment of the truth that sets men free.

The quality of life that I have just now described is called 'holiness,' or 'sanctification.' Its most obvious and central feature is its likeness to Christ, or to God in Christ. Sanctification is, in fact, God's life transplanted in the believer and then lived out by means of a moment-to-moment dependence on God. Although I have spoken of sanctification as simply the learning and application of Christian theology, it goes far beyond that. Sanctification is not at all something we can do for ourselves; it is something we must allow God to do in us. And yet, without the active involvement of one's own will, it will not get done at all:

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life... (Rom. 6:13).

God holds the Christian responsible for the proper use of his physical body—a body that is included in the total redemption Christ has won for him. But just as a Christian's physical life did not come into existence except by God's power, and cannot continue to exist unless God sustains it, so it is with *spiritual* life: we are born again by the working of the Holy Spirit, and must depend upon Him for growth into mature Christlikeness. Yet, without the cooperation of my free will, my spiritual life will wither. As I must choose to eat food to sustain my physical life, I must actively choose to do God's will and feed on His Word in order to grow up in Christlikeness. Still, it is God who causes the growth.

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that

you have tasted that the Lord is good (1 Peter 2:1-3).

Let the theologians among us translate such exotic-sounding words as 'sanctification' into the common conceptual coinage with which secular man, starving as he is, may buy spiritual bread and milk. No matter what his materialistic mentors may have taught him about his spiritual cravings being "imaginary" or "absurd," man still hungers for meaning. He longs to find a point of reference toward which to direct his life and devote his entire being. This crisis of personal meaning constitutes his most compelling awareness of the tragedy of sin in his life: he is undeniably cut off from Whatever or Whoever is supposed to bring meaning to his life. Sanctification is a vital aspect of the spiritual answer that God has provided for lost men and women. Through the wonder of what God has done for

us in Christ's death and resurrection, our lives can once again be directed toward knowing, loving, and serving the personal God in whose image we are made.

The man in the street needs God no less than does the Christian theologian. God's gracious offer of sanctification exchanges an abstract, "out there" deity for a personal, indwelling Savior:

...The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. *Sanctification* is a vital part of redemption, *without which one cannot be saved* (read Heb. 12:14; compare John 17:17).
- B. The result of salvation is sanctification (the separation of the holy from the unholy): it is the dedication and consecration of the Christian, both in character and conduct (read 1 Peter 1:15).

II. PREPARATORY READING

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of

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sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you (Rom. 8:1-11).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will come to understand the meaning of the term, "sanctification."
- B. We shall realize the connection of sanctification with God's whole plan of redemption.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Man must be sanctified by God (read 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; compare 1 Peter 1:2).

1. Jesus is our righteousness and our *sanctification* (see 1 Cor. 1:30; compare Heb. 10:10, 29; 13:12).
2. God *sanctifies*; the obedient ones are the *sanctified* (see Heb. 2:11; compare 1 Cor. 1:1-3).
3. *Sanctification* is the result of a vital union with Christ Jesus (note carefully Rom. 6:1-11, 17-19; compare Col. 3:1-5ff).

B. Man must be sanctified to the way of life revealed in Christ Jesus (read Acts 26:17-18; Col. 1:22; Eph. 5:25-26; compare Phil. 2:5).

1. This way is *affirmed* by God's Word (see Rom. 6:19, 22; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3-4, 7; 1 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14).
2. This way is *applied* by the Christian's commitment

Notes:

Notes:

- a. To the Word of God: "growing in grace and knowledge" (read John 17:17, 19; compare 2 Peter 3:18; Acts 20:32)
- b. To spiritual things: "walking after the Spirit" (read Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Peter 1:2, 15; also 2 Thess. 2:13 and compare Gal. 5:16-25)

V. CONCLUSION

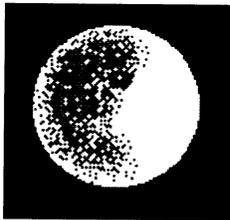
- A. Sanctification is given *initially* by Christ (read 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11; compare Col. 1:22-23).
- B. Sanctification is realized *progressively* by faith's application of spirituality (read 2 Peter 1:5-8; Rom. 6:19 and compare 2 Thess. 2:13 with Rom. 8:1-17).
- C. Sanctification is the inevitable *outcome* and inseparable *consequence* of being born again (read 1 John 3:9-14; compare Rom. 6:1-4).

- D. Sanctification is the *evidence* of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit (read 1 Cor. 6:11; compare Rom. 8:9, 14; Gal. 5:22-25).
- E. Sanctification can *increase* and *grow* by degrees (read John 17:17; 1 Thess. 4:1-3; compare 2 Peter 3:18; Col. 1:21-23; 2:6-7; also compare Gal. 3:1-3).
- F. Sanctification depends upon *knowledge* of God's Word and diligent *application* of it (read John 17:17; compare Col. 1:9-14; Phil. 1:9-11; also Eph. 1:15-21; 3:14-4:1, 17-24).
- G. Sanctification is absolutely *essential* for fellowship and communion with the Lord God: "without holiness [sanctification] no one will see the Lord" (read Heb. 12:14; compare 1 John 3:3; Matt. 7:21-23).

Notes:

24

***MAN'S NEED:
GLORIFICATION***



*I consider that
our present sufferings
are not worth comparing
with the glory
that will be
revealed in us
(Romans 8:18).*



"Nice guys finish last," claims a worldly adage, and it seems that most of the world's political leaders take such sayings to heart. "Nice guys," after all, don't usually seize power by military force or secure their own election by campaigns of deceit and character assassination. It is as Jesus said:

"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them..." (Luke 22:25).

But is it true that "nice guys finish last"? Perhaps this is a case of premature judgment. The human race is still being run. How do we know who will finally finish first, or last?

Christians claim to know. They say that the Last Man is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God:

The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have born the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47-49).

The Bible clearly teaches that the Christian's ultimate hope is to one day share in the likeness of Christ's resurrection and glory. It is this doctrine, perhaps more than any other, that decisively lifts Christianity above and beyond all merely parochial and temporal appeal. Christianity is far more than an outgrowth of first century Judaism that was fortunate enough to survive the ravages of persecution and cultural revolution. The

apocalyptic and eschatological dimensions of Christianity, rooted as they are in the Old Testament revelation and the traditions of Judaism, extend infinitely beyond the obscurity of first century Palestine to encompass all of history and the entire cosmos:

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8:19-21).

Christianity offers a redemption that is both cosmic and eternal in scope. Its relevance cannot be restricted to the pre-scientific world, any more than it could be limited to the nation Israel. The implications of the empty tomb, when combined with the power of the Spirit who came on the day of Pentecost, were

sufficient to turn the ancient world upside down. If the message is true, it can turn the modern world upside down, too.

But perhaps we are already upside down, and need to be set upright again. For if the gospel of Christ means anything, it must mean that this world's standards and values are completely topsy-turvy. "Nice guys"—if I may so utterly understate my point—don't simply finish last; they also finish first. Jesus is not only Omega (the End); He is also Alpha (the Beginning). And His glorious resurrection and bodily ascension into heaven prove conclusively the veracity of His words:

"So the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16).

From the gospel he preached, the apostle Paul learned that a deliberate choice to be last, to become the servant of all, to give up one's own rightful possessions and

privileges, was the means by which the Man Jesus of Nazareth received honor and glory and station above all others:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:5-11).

As it was for the Master, so it must be for the servant. There can be no crown of glory apart from a cross of suffering. First humiliation, then glorification: that is the pattern. The manifestation of divine

glory and power is exactly proportional to the degree of human humility and weakness:

For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you (2 Cor. 13:4).

In John's gospel, the glory of God in Christ is manifested supremely through the lifting up of Christ on the cross:

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was

for this reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" (John 12:23-28).

Whatever a man seeks for himself, he will lose; whatever he willingly loses so that the life of God may be seen in him, he will receive back a hundredfold—with persecutions—and will inherit eternal life. The Christian, as much as the modern materialist, strives to live in such a way as will secure his personal happiness. The difference is that the materialist's ends are all temporal and short-term, while the Christian is investing in an eternal life which human eyes have beheld and human hands have handled. For the materialist, the short-term end justifies whatever means are necessary to secure the goal. For the Christian, the Ultimate End—the Last Man—must sit in judgment upon every means we have used in either opposing or serving Him. Thus, C.S. Lewis writes concerning Christ's parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30):

...nothing can eliminate from the parable the divine accolade, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." With that, a good deal of what I had been thinking all my life fell down like a house of cards. I suddenly remembered that no one can enter heaven except as a child; and nothing is so obvious in a child—not in a conceited child, but in a good child—as its great and undisguised pleasure in being praised.¹

So it is perfectly right for the Christian to seek glory *from* God, as long as his first aim is to bring glory to God. And glorifying God means to live in such a way as to cause His glory (not our own) to be seen and admired through our loving submission to Him. Such a life is well pleasing to the Father; it is the very purpose for which God created mankind in His image. Glorification is the ultimate fulfillment of

our human nature; it is the consummation of our union with Christ.

If, in the wisdom of the world, "nice guys finish last," it is no less true that, in the wisdom of God, those who are last will be first.

Now if we are [God's] children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Rom. 8:17).



¹C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," from *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 11-12.

Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. The fall of man resulted in humiliation and suffering: All men, through sin, have fallen short of *God's glory* (read Rom. 3:23).

B. Man, the highest of earthly creatures, created in his Maker's own image, needs to be lifted up from his degraded position and sinful condition: Such is the "*hope of glory*" (read Col. 1:27).

II. PREPARATORY READING

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation— but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing

with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole world has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (Rom. 8:12-30).

Notes:

Notes:

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will show that God desires to glorify fallen mankind (read Rom. 8:17-18; compare 1 Peter 4:14ff).

- B. We will show the relationship of glorification to the whole of God's redemptive purpose and plan (read 2 Thess. 1:10, 12; compare 1 Peter 5:10).
 - 1. The glorification of man is by the grace of God.

 - 2. The glorification of man can be realized only through and in Jesus Christ.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The glorification of Christ Jesus reveals the character and presence of God in human history (read Phil. 2:5-11).
 - 1. The sufferings of Jesus glorified the Father (see John 12:27-33; compare 1 Peter 1:11, 21; 4:11).

2. The humiliating death of Jesus resulted in glorifying both the Father and the Son (see John 13:31; compare John 17:1, 4-5).
 3. The glorification of Jesus exceeds all other glory (see Phil. 2:9-11; compare 1 Tim. 3:16).
 4. Jesus shares His unique glory with those who suffer with Him (see John 17:4; Col. 3:4; compare Rom. 8:17-18).
- B. The glorification of Christians is already revealed, but yet to be fully realized (read Rom. 8:12-30; compare Eph. 1:18).**
1. The Christian's glorification is part of God's eternal purpose (see Rom. 8:28-30; 9:23-24; compare 1 Cor. 2:7-9).
 2. The Christian's salvation in Christ is "with eternal glory" (see 2 Tim. 2:10; 2 Cor. 4:17; compare 1 Peter 5:10).

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3. The Christian's calling is into God's own "kingdom and glory" (see 1 Thess. 2:12; compare 2 Thess. 2:13-14; see also Mark 9:1-8 and compare 2 Peter 1:16-18).
4. The Christian's future glory shall be revealed (see Rom. 8:18-21; compare 1 Peter 5:1; 1 John 3:2).
5. The Christian's glorification involves his physical body (see Rom. 8:18-23; compare Phil. 3:21).
6. The Christian's joy is the earnest expectation of this glory (see Rom. 5:2; compare Col. 1:27).
7. The Christian's glory is with Christ (see John 17:24; compare Phil. 4:19; Col. 3:4).

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Let us suffer with Jesus, that we may be glorified with Him.

B. Let us magnify God for His great wisdom and purpose in redeeming His people

1. Whom He *foreknew*

2. Whom He *predestined* (to be conformed to the image of His Son)

3. Whom He *called*

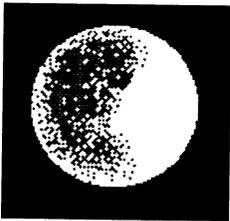
4. Whom He *justified*

5. Whom He *glorified* (see Rom. 8:28-30)

Notes:

25

***THE REDEEMER:
PURPOSED AND PROMISED***



*God,
in His eternal purpose
and His promise
of blessing
through Abraham's seed,
has provided
everything necessary
for our salvation
in Christ.*

THE REDEEMER: PURPOSED AND PROMISED



As I have grown older, I have noticed within my character an increasing degree of suspicion toward people who want to sell things to me. The cheerful voice on the telephone, the smiling stranger at my door, the attractive flyer in the mail— all of these elicit from me an almost reflexive response of “sales resistance.” I have been taken enough times by now to have become quite convinced that there is no such thing as a free lunch, and that any proposition that advertises itself as “too good to be true” is probably just that.

The follies of youth are fraught with danger, but the wisdom that comes with years presents its own brand of temptation. A healthy skepticism can easily sour into an unhealthy cynicism, an aloofness from “the herd.” What can

be offered to “the man who has everything”? He already knows whatever you know—and more. He is certainly no charity case; he can get along perfectly well without your advice and your goodwill offerings. He is the Self-made Man.

Now I can genuinely sympathize with such a man; I can easily see how he gradually hardened into the dour old fossil that he is. It is hard to believe that “the best things in life are free” when there is a price tag on everything from birth to burial, and when the television messages to which we daily subject ourselves address us only as Consumer Units. And yet, there remain a few precious commodities which have yet to be packaged, priced, and taxed: genuine friendship; true love between a man and a woman; the pride a father takes in his son. Such treasures are matters of

personal relationship; by their very nature, they cannot be bought. Any attempt to purchase a personal relationship can only degrade and ultimately destroy it.

At the outset, the Bible insists that man's primary personal relationship is not with his neighbor, or even his wife; it is with the Creator in whose image he has been made. And now we come to the real tragedy of cynicism: this Creator cannot be bought; yet, only through relationship with Him can wholeness be realized in a human life. God's relationship to mankind has always been a matter of His undeserved kindness, and not man's merit. God was under no obligation to create man; and now that man has fallen into the clutches of sin and death, God is under no obligation to save him. But the cynic does not believe that a relationship can be other than economic; there is therefore no place in his world for grace, love, forgiveness, and

redemption. There are only profit and loss columns, ledger sheets, bookkeeping, and legalism. The legalist believes that he can bribe his way out of anything. "Money talks"; if God places a premium value on righteousness, the legalist is ready to roll up his sleeves, produce the legal tender, and pay his debt to God—with interest.

But how would the legalist react if the woman he had fallen in love with and married were to commit adultery against him, and then attempt to appease him by serving his favorite dessert at supper? Would he praise her for her shrewdness, or would he not rather say that she had added insult to injury? We ridicule any personal relationship when we treat it as a matter of mere economics. What must God think of our legalism?

When sin first entered the world, many things changed: the psychological awareness of the man and the woman, the relationship

between the two of them, the ecological balance between humanity and nature. But the basis of God's relationship with man remained the same: God's unconditional love and unmerited favor. The Fall brought an immediate word of deliverance from God in the form of an announcement of doom upon the Serpent:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

This prophetic announcement was carried forward into history, embellished and enlarged upon by further prophetic revelations as the fullness of the times drew nearer. It was taken up into God's promise of blessing through the seed of Abraham; it was the beginning of Israel's messianic hope, a dominant redemptive theme which found expression in such diverse strands

as the Prophet, the Son of David, the Suffering Servant, and the Son of Man. Through these and other prophetic portraits, God revealed to His people something of the Person and manner by which He had purposed to redeem them from before the foundation of the world.

But I can hear the cynic's protest: "This so-called eternal purpose of redemption is a farce! If the outcome of the game is fixed, why bother to play? When the ending of the story is known from the beginning, why should anyone care what happens in between?" To this, I reply that the whole point is whether or not we will choose to *believe* the story. Despite the reliability of our sources, we may choose to disregard the inside information they have given us as to the outcome of the game. Our loyalties may be misled by a superficial assessment of the situation; we may yield under pressure and switch sides. When the stakes are

human souls, the game can hardly be considered "pointless." Besides, here we are; we *must* play.

Is there such a thing as "something for nothing"? Does God have something that I need, but can't buy for myself? Beware the cheerful voice on the telephone, the smiling salesman at the door, the fast-talking television pitchman. But leave room in your heart for the redeeming love of God:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip (John 1:45-46).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Notes:

A. The purpose of God is all-encompassing in its scope (read Eph. 1-6; Col. 1:9-2:14).

1. It involves *eternity and time* (Eph. 1:4, 10).
2. It involves *God's concern for sinful mankind* (see Eph. 1:7-12).
3. It involves *the reconciliation of all peoples* in one body, the church (see Eph. 1:22-23; 2:14-22).
4. It involves *the working out of God's redemptive plan* on earth (see Eph. 1:3-5; compare 3:1-11).
5. It involves *conflict in heavenly places* (see Eph. 6:10-12).
6. It involves *a Redeemer*, in order that lost lives (souls) may be saved (see Eph. 1:3-7).

Notes:

B. The Redeemer, Jesus Christ, was divinely purposed and promised (read Eph. 1:1ff).

1. Every spiritual blessing is realized in Christ (v. 3).
2. Redemption is accomplished through the blood of Christ (v. 7).
3. "All things" are summed up in Christ (vv. 10-12).

II. PREPARATORY READING

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in

Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment— to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession— to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:3-14).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

A. We shall set forth the New Testament's revelation of Jesus as Redeemer

1. From sin and its power (see 1 Cor. 15:55-58; compare John 8:21, 24; see also Gal. 1:4)
2. From sin's penalty and punishment (see Matt. 10:28; 25:46)

Notes:

Notes:

B. We will show that God, in His eternal purpose and promise of blessing through Abraham's "seed" (offspring), has provided everything necessary for our salvation in Christ Jesus, our Redeemer (read Luke 19:10; compare Gen. 22:17-18 with Gal. 3:8, 16; also see Gen. 3:15 and compare Gal. 4:4).

IV. OUTLINE

A. Our Redeemer is *personal*.

1. He is the Son of God "who loved me" (see Gal. 2:20; compare John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10; Rom. 5:6-8; Eph. 2:4-5).
2. This intimate, personal relationship is seen in one's individual obedience to the gospel (see Rom. 6:1-11, 17; compare Eph. 1:13-14 with 1 Cor. 15:1-4; see also Col. 3:1-4).
 - a. We die with Christ.
 - b. We are united with Christ, "all of

us who were baptized into Christ”
(Rom. 6:3).

c. We are raised with Christ.

3. In baptism we “wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching” to which we were entrusted: conformity to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (see Rom. 6:17; compare 1 Cor. 15:1-4; see also Phil. 3:10-11).

B. Our Redeemer is *perfect*.

1. He is perfect in every way (see Heb. 4:14-16; 5:7-9; 7:25; compare 1 Peter 2:21-24).
2. Everything and everyone falls short of Jesus in redeeming lost mankind: He alone is Savior (see 1 Cor. 2:2; compare Col. 1:18-23; 2:8-15; see also Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7).
 - a. Jesus was *announced* as redeeming Savior (read Matt. 1:21; compare John 1:29).

Notes:

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b. Jesus was *attested* as redeeming Savior (read 1 John 4:14; Acts 4:10; compare 1 Tim. 1:15; Rom. 1:16-17; Gal. 1:4).

c. Jesus was *authenticated* as redeeming Savior (read Mark 16:15-20; John 20:30-31; Acts 5:12; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4).

C. Our Redeemer is *powerful*.

1. His power (or authority) is set forth in every aspect of His being and experience (see Matt. 28:18; compare Mark 4:41).

a. His power is seen in His *works* (read John 11:24-25).

b. His power is heard in His *words* (read John 6:63; 7:46; 12:48-50).

c. His power is embodied in His *walk* (read John 8:46; compare 1 Peter 2:21).

d. His power is triumphant in His *crucifixion* (read John 10:17-18; compare Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5; see also 1 Cor. 15:55ff; Rom. 8:1-3; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:14ff).

e. His power is manifested in His *glorious resurrection and ascension* (read Rom. 1:4 and compare Rev. 1:17-18; Rom. 6:9-10; see also Acts 1:9-11 and compare Eph. 4:8-9).

f. His power is effective in His *present ministry as High Priest* (read Heb. 1:1-8; compare 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14-16; 1 John 2:1-2; see also Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21).

2. Only He who has such power is “able to save completely” (see Heb. 7:25).

D. Our Redeemer is *pleading*

1. “Come to Me...”: He offers a discipleship of following and cross-bearing (see Luke 9:23).

Notes:

Notes:

2. "Come to Me...": He offers life abundantly (see John 7:37-39; 10:10; compare Rev. 22:17).

3. "Come to Me...": He offers rest for the weary and burdened soul (see Matt. 11:28-30; compare Heb. 3:7-4:11).

V. CONCLUSION

A. Jesus, the fulfillment of God's purpose and promise, is our only Redeemer (read John 14:6).

B. Human salvation is found in "no other name" than that of Jesus (read Acts 4:12; compare Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38).

C. The Bible's theme, from cover to cover, is the redemption that is realized in Christ Jesus, God's only Savior for the world.

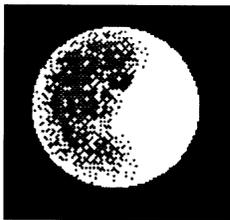
1. This Redeemer was *purposed* in eternity.

2. This Redeemer was *predetermined* before the foundation of the world.
 3. This Redeemer was *prophesied* throughout Old Testament history.
 4. This Redeemer was *presented* in the fullness of the times.
- D. Salvation is offered to all through this Redeemer *today* (read 2 Cor. 5:19-6:2).

Notes:

26

***THE REDEEMED:
PURPOSED AND PROMISED***



*Consequently, you are
no longer foreigners
and aliens,
but fellow citizens
with God's people
and members
of God's household
(Ephesians 2:19).*

THE REDEEMED: PURPOSED AND PROMISED



One of capitalism's most clever devices is a gimmick known as the "package deal." It may take a variety of forms: two for the price of one; buy one now and the rest of the set later; a substantial discount for purchases of bulk quantities. Many package deals are good for both buyer and seller: merchandise is moved more quickly, and the consumer gets more for his money. But there are some package deals of which we may be justifiably wary. Take, for instance, the popular maxim, "Love me, love my dog." Does my posture of affection and goodwill toward my neighbor inevitably involve a commensurate degree of affection on my part toward his mangy mongrel, which daily digs up my yard, leaves droppings on my doorstep, terrorizes the mailman, and keeps the whole

neighborhood awake at night with its relentless baying? Or what of the individual whose social conscience motivates him to become politically involved: must he or she then surrender all personal concerns and compromise every conscientious objection in the interest of "toeing the party line"?

Any package deal should be carefully examined before a decision is made to buy. Certain commodities ought not to be considered inseparable from one another; the purchase of a bag of oats should not necessarily entail the acquisition of a horse. The Latin language, though officially pronounced "dead," still offers us many useful words to summarize concepts that we use on a daily basis, one of which is *non sequitur*. This Latin term, so functional that it can be found in any good English

dictionary, simply means "it does not follow." The *non sequitur* issue is important when we are considering whether or not to buy a package deal: Do the two or more elements making up the package necessarily, or even logically, follow one another? Are they in any sense complementary (as in the case of a flashlight and batteries), and if so, does the possession of one element necessitate the accompaniment of the other articles offered in the deal? A television advertisement offering a set of oriental kitchen knives along with the purchase of a collapsible fishing rod may be a tempting proposition at only \$19.95, but it involves a *non sequitur* which should cause one to seriously consider the soundness of such a transaction.

In obedience to the commission he received directly from the risen and glorified Jesus of Nazareth, the apostle Paul carried the testimony of the gospel throughout

the Roman world. By his proclamation of salvation in the living Lord, Paul converted multitudes from Judaism and paganism to Christ. He planted Christian communities, appointed qualified leaders, and built up the churches in the knowledge of Christ that had been revealed to him. As an apostle, Paul's preaching centered on the Person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. But Paul's understanding of the mystery of Christ was a kind of "package deal": he knew that the eternal purpose of God in Christ involved both a Head (Christ), and a body (the church). He never blurred the distinction between the two aspects; he knew that the gospel was a message about the Head, and that obedience to that message resulted in membership in the body. He was sure that the Head is Savior, and the body is the saved community which take its direction from the Head. Nevertheless, in Paul's understanding, one could no

more have Christ without the church than one could have a head without a body. To be in relationship to Christ is to be in relationship to the redeemed body of believers—one's fellow members.

Many today who consider themselves Christians claim to love Christ while despising the church. But the church, as the body of Christ, shares in the life of Christ the Head, by the indwelling Spirit of God. As one cannot have the Father without the Son, neither can one have Christ without His church. They are a unity, a package deal.

I can certainly understand why some are tempted to try to get the Head without the body. The Head, after all, is perfected and glorious; the body is yet blemished. The wrinkles and blemishes on the body are, at certain times and places, so ugly that they distract us from the beauty of the Head, and seem utterly unrelated to Him. Jesus Himself taught that such reactions to moral and spiritual

ugliness in the body are to be expected from the unbelieving world. He will forgive the sins of the church; He will not excuse them. Neither should we. But we should reconsider whether our presuppositions and expectations of the church are proper. Many stumbled at the Christ because of misinformation and misunderstanding: "Could the Christ come from Galilee?" "Would the Messiah work on the Sabbath?" "Would the Savior of the world die on a cursed Roman cross?" By equally superficial and misinformed standards, many weigh the church and find it wanting. No doubt, it *does* want, for Paul assures us that Christ will one day present the church to Himself.

...a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (Eph. 5:27).

But that day is yet to come. Likewise, John reassures us that, although the world does not

recognize the church in her present unglorified state, her members are nonetheless the children of God, who shall one day bear the perfect likeness of Christ (1 John 3:1-2). But again, that day is in the future. For the present, we would do well to remember Paul's unflattering portrait of the church as it exists in the eyes of the world:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

“Foolish”; “weak”; “lowly”; “despised”—this is how the church looks through secular eyes. That is how God ordained that it

should look, so that there could be no conceivable basis for self-congratulation on the part of the church, nor any superficial attractiveness to infatuate the world. Like the Servant who bought her with His blood, the church possesses a beauty which must be sought beneath her outward appearance. Hypocrisy disproves relationship to Christ; weakness, inconsistency, and failure do not.

Paul not only taught that Christ and the church are a package deal; he also taught that all different sorts of human beings must be redeemed together in the same package:

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:6).

So it is that Jews and Gentiles, civilized peoples and barbaric tribesmen, men and women, slaves

and free—all are equally redeemed in Christ, and equally heirs of the same promised spiritual blessings (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 3:11). And the package deal means that one cannot embrace Jesus without embracing this amazing spiritual family that He has brought into being by His death and resurrection. All the dividing walls that alienate people from one another have crumbled before the glory of the cross of Christ, by which human hatred and hostility are put to death. “Love Me, love Mine,” says Christ. It is strictly a package deal.

It is naive to expect sinless perfection of any enterprise involving fallen human beings—even when that enterprise is God’s eternal purpose, and the human beings are redeemed people. The redemption won by the suffering and glorification of Christ is yet to be fully revealed:

...the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:21-23; see also Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30).

Until the redemption of mankind is consummated and the package deal of God’s eternal purpose encompasses the creation itself, we should not expect to see flawless perfection in the church. But if the body of Christ is truly one with the Head, we should expect to see in it the reality of redeemed relationships. As Jesus said:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).



Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. The church, which is the body of Christ, is the community of all the redeemed (read Eph. 1:1-7, 23; compare Eph. 5:23; Rev. 5:9-10).

B. This church (i.e., all of redeemed humanity) is according to God's eternal purpose and promise (read Eph. 3:1-11).

II. PREPARATORY READING

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am

less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory (Eph. 3:1-13).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will show that the church is neither an “afterthought” nor an “emergency arrangement.”**
- B. We want to realize and appreciate the fact that Christ’s church is His glorious blood-bought body, which God purposed in eternity (read Eph. 3:8-11, 20-21).**

Notes:

Notes:

1. The crux and core of God's eternal purpose is Christ and His church (consider 1 Peter 1:10-12).
2. Redemption, as clearly set forth throughout the revelation of God's predetermined plan, finds fulfillment in Christ Jesus and His church.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The church, which is the product of divine wisdom and purpose, is founded upon Christ Jesus (read Eph. 1:4, 11; 3:1-11, 20-21; compare Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; 1 Peter 2:5-11).
 1. The church is the *fullness of Christ* (see Eph. 1:23).
 2. The church is those who are *alive with Christ* (see Eph. 2:5).
 3. The church is the *body of the reconciled* (see Eph. 2:14-16).

4. The church is the *temple of the Lord* (see Eph. 2:21).
 5. The church is the *habitation of God* (see Eph. 2:22).
 6. The church is the *glory of God* (see Eph. 3:20-21).
 7. The church is the *unity of the Spirit* (see Eph. 4:3-5).
 8. The church is the *bride of Christ* (see Eph. 5:23-24, 32).
 9. The church is the *army of God* (see Eph. 6:10-18).
- B. The church is important because it was purposed in eternity and is related to Jesus Christ.
1. The church is *subjected* to Him (see Eph. 5:22, 24).
 2. The church is *saved* by Him (see Eph. 5:23).

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3. The church is *loved* by Him (see Eph. 5:25, 29).
4. The church is *ransomed* by Him (see Eph. 5:25).
5. The church is *cleansed* by Him (see Eph. 5:26-27).

V. CONCLUSION

A. *Let us realize* that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was a product of God's eternal purpose and was purchased by the blood of Christ (read Acts 20:28).

1. The church is not a product of man's labor or ingenuity.
2. The church is not a sect or a denomination.
3. The church is not God's "after-thought": it is an integral part of God's eternal purpose.

B. *Let us remember* that Christ came on a mission of eternal significance.

1. He *died* for His church (see Acts 20:28; compare Eph. 5:25).
2. He *intercedes* for His church (see Heb. 7:25; compare 1 John 2:1).
3. He *is coming back* for His church (see Eph. 5:23, 27; compare 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-10).

C. *Let us rejoice* that Christ's eternally purposed church— His bride and body— is the community of all the saved, to which we can be added (read Eph. 5:23; compare Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13).

1. Let us not
 - a. Neglect her: in either her work or her worship
 - b. Ignore her: by disobedience to her Head

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c. Despise her: by our indifference to her well-being

d. Dishonor her: by disrespecting her dignity and importance

e. Reproach her: by living impure and ungodly lives

f. Forsake her: because of "hypocrites," hurt feelings, or whatever

2. But let us

a. Honor Christ by respecting His glorious church

b. Appreciate the church as Christ's own body

c. Assist the church in her God-given mission

d. Magnify and extol the church's exalted purpose and cause

- e. Make known the church's identity, importance, and glorious life

- f. Be faithful members of Christ's church all the days of our lives

Notes:



THE ETERNAL
PURPOSE AND
PLAN OF
GOD

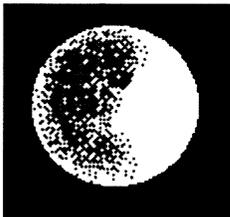
Book III

The Promise...

Larry Deason
with Bill Bean

27

*GOD'S PROMISE
TO ABRAHAM*



*Two parts of the promise:
the first part,
the nation-land aspect;
and the second part,
the spiritual-seed aspect.*

GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM



Nowhere is the vastness of the gulf between heaven and earth more obvious than in the area of values. Take, for example, God's perspective of "greatness" as compared with man's. Assuming, for the sake of argument and on the basis of good historical evidence, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God who perfectly revealed the divine mind: it is clear that God's idea of "greatness" is perfectly compatible with certain ideas and activities that the natural human mind finds disgusting and degrading. For all the monuments erected by Christendom to honor Jesus, and all the lip service it has paid to the way of love that He embodied among men, there is precious little practical commitment to the towel of service, the virtue of humility, and the way of the cross. Washing dirty feet,

touching lepers, and laying down one's life are not concepts with which the modern church seems at all comfortable.

I must confess that I sometimes find within myself a preference for a less "radical" Christianity, a Christianity more at home in the superficial, short-term, sensory motivations of this present world. But when I recall the manner in which our Lord taught us to pray and to live, I am immediately rebuked by a difference between God's mind and my own that seems to go all the way down to the roots of my being. How does one pray that God's will be done "on earth as it is in heaven" without realizing that this would mean the destruction of one's own precious self-centered kingdom? How dare we think that a call to follow Jesus Christ could be anything less than radical!

When God calls a man or a woman out of the world, He calls that person to die to everything he or she ever valued or believed in or knew. Life is begun anew, on a new foundation: the lordship of Christ. One learns to walk and talk all over again, to the glory of God and not for the gratification of flesh. Good things once treasured may again be taken up and enjoyed, but now in the service of Christ. Compared to the knowledge of Him, even good things must be regarded as mere "dung" (Phil 3:8, KJV).

It is not in vain that the Hebrew patriarch Abraham is called "the father of the faithful," for it is after his divine calling and walk of faith that the Christian experience is patterned. The facts of Abraham's story are known well enough to require only a cursory rehearsal. He was born Abram, son of Terah, of a well-to-do Semitic family. Abram's family lived in the midst of an advanced, though polytheistic,

civilization at Ur of the Chaldeans. He married Sarai, his younger half-sister (an arrangement neither uncommon nor immoral by ancient Near Eastern standards). His father's entire family moved to Haran in Mesopotamia, where Abram received God's call to leave his entire ancestral heritage and go wherever God would lead him. With this calling came God's promise to Abram:

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:2-3).

Abram's spiritual career is well worth studying, for it reveals not only a champion of faith and courage, but also a man who knew lapses of faith and courage. Yet, his basic commitment of trust in God never wavered, but grew stronger and stronger. God rewarded his faith

by accounting him righteous, increasing his wealth, guiding his steps, renewing the promises, changing his name to Abraham ("father of a multitude"), and finally, giving him a son and an heir in Isaac.

It is interesting that both Jews and Christians claim Abraham as their forefather. (He is also revered by Muslims.) The New Testament writings shed light on that which first century Christians saw and valued in Abraham, as compared to that which non-Christian Jews claimed in him. The contrast is stark: the Christians saw in Abraham a man who trusted in God rather than in flesh, and who valued eternal blessings above temporal; the Pharisaic Jews esteemed Abraham as a man who had won the favor of God by his own meritorious works, and who had thus procured for all his physical descendants an unconditional and inalienable right to every divine

blessing. And, whereas the Christian priority was on the spiritual aspects of the Abrahamic promise ("...and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed"), the Pharisaic emphasis tended toward the national and temporal elements ("The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you..."). Increasingly, it became clear that the controversy between church and synagogue had to do with each community's idea of the significance of Abraham and the promises he had received:

But when he [John] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham" (Matt. 3:7-10).

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" ... "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things" (John 8:31-32, 39-40).

Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.... The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.... who is Christ (Gal. 3:6-7, 16).

Because their values were temporal and their hope set on their own righteousness, many first century Jews could not see in Jesus of Nazareth the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. I fear for many

who claim to be Christians and yet know so little of Abraham's faith. All who hope to build heaven on earth by their own efforts (whether ecclesiastical or political), all who believe a gospel that promises health and wealth in the here and now, all who trust in their own righteous deeds or equate enrollment in heaven with a listing in the church directory, all who are so burdened down with materialism and temporal concerns that they refuse to move when God is calling—what would John the Baptizer say to such as these? What would our Lord, the promised Seed of Abraham, say about your faith, and mine? Do we know anything of a faith such as this?

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and

Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-10).

What we see in Abraham determines what we will see in Jesus Christ, the Son of Abraham. 

Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. God made a promise to the patriarch Abraham which would eventually affect the whole human race.

B. The history of Israel (Jacob and his posterity) is the unfolding of the fulfillment of this promise.

1. The promise began to be fulfilled soon after it was made (see Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:15-22; compare Gen. 21:1-4).

2. The promise was renewed with David (see 2 Sam. 7:11ff).

3. The promise found its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ (see Gal. 3:16; compare Matt. 1:1ff; Rom. 1:1-4; 2 Tim. 1:8).

II. PREPARATORY READING

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you

into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. The Canaanites were then in the land, but the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev (Gen. 12:1-9).

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all

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nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Gen. 22:15-18).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We want to gain understanding of God's promise to Abraham and the significance of its two-fold nature.
- B. We will discern the various aspects of the promise and realize the circumstances of their fulfillment.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The Abrahamic promise was made up of two essential parts.
 - 1. The first part was the *nation-land* aspect (see Gen. 12:1-3, 7).
 - a. Abraham's descendants would become a great nation.
 - b. That nation would inherit the land of Canaan.

- c. Abraham's name would be great among men.
- d. Abraham would receive God's providential care and blessing.
- 2. The second part was the *spiritual-seed* aspect (see Gen. 12:3; compare 22:18).
 - a. This aspect of the promise is seen in the expression, "...through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."
 - b. This part of the promise is the principal aspect.
- B. The "spiritual-seed" aspect of the promise to Abraham is fulfilled in the New Testament.
 - 1. The first part of the promise (nation-land aspect) magnifies and prepares for the second part (spiritual-seed aspect), which is the primary aspect of the promise to Abraham.

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- a. A "seed" (offspring; posterity) is promised to Abraham: i.e., Isaac, Jacob (read Gen. 13:14-17; 15:1ff; 17:6-7, 15-16; 21:1-4; 28:1-4; 35:11-12; 48:1-4).
- b. This "seed" would become a great nation (read Gen. 18:18; 35:11; 46:3).
- c. This "seed" would involve a company of nations (read Gen. 28:3; 35:11; compare 17:6, 17; see also Gen. 48:4).
- d. This "seed" would include kings (read Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11).
- e. This "seed" (through Isaac and Jacob) would inherit the land of Canaan (read Gen. 28:13ff, etc.).
- f. This "seed" would bear One who would bring blessing upon all the nations (read Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:8, 16).

2. The emphasis in every context of the promise and its renewals is upon its principal aspect: that all mankind shall be blessed in Abraham and his seed (see Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:17-18; 26:3-4; 28:13-14).

C. The promise is confirmed by two covenants made by God.

1. The first covenant involved "passing between the pieces" of various slaughtered animals: a ritual signifying a solemn covenant oath (see Gen. 15:1-18; compare Jer. 34:18).

2. The second covenant involved circumcision: a physical sign of covenant dedication to the LORD (see Gen. 17:2, 4, 7-8, 19).

V. CONCLUSION

A. The *nation-land* aspect of the promise to Abraham is fulfilled in the Old Testament.

Notes:

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1. It was *national*.

2. It was *physical*.

3. It was *temporal*.

B. The *spiritual-seed* aspect of the promise to Abraham is fulfilled in the New Testament.

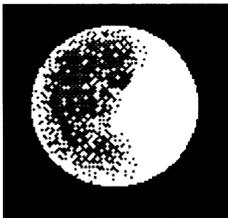
1. It is *universal*.

2. It is *spiritual*.

3. It is *eternal*.

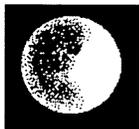
28

***THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE NATION-LAND ASPECT***



*The two aspects
of the promise
are so related
as not to destroy
the unity of the historical
unfolding of God's
plan of redemption.*

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE: THE NATION-LAND ASPECT



The relationship of the physical realm to the spiritual has posed a crucial problem for the human race ever since the Fall—in other words, ever since it became necessary for mankind to approach God through religion rather than in the direct “child to Father” manner that was in effect before Adam and Eve sinned. Religion is essentially a provision for man’s need of fellowship with God, whether or not any particular religious system may understand itself in such terms. Having fallen short of the glory of God, having failed to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven, human beings must find a way back to their spiritual home. Most religions are almost entirely human inventions—perhaps corruptions of a primeval knowledge of God and His ways. Many are little better than

crude attempts at bribing the Almighty, and not a few contain elements of gross immorality and superstitious ignorance. The religion presented in the Old Testament however, while making certain concessions to the moral and spiritual climate in which it took root, is nonetheless a religion revealed by God and not invented by man. It reaches its goal in Jesus Christ, who fulfills the legal requirements, types, and prophecies of the Old Testament. Jesus renders all religion—even revealed religion—obsolete.

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4).

Through him [Jesus] everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).

But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Cor. 3:14-16).

We could summon many other New Testament passages to make the same basic point: those who had firsthand knowledge of Jesus Christ believed that, in Him, God had so thoroughly dealt with mankind's sin problem that human religious effort was at best a superfluous distraction, and at worst a blasphemous persistence in unbelief. God's Son Jesus Christ is the Reconciler of God and man; His perfect redemptive work needs no help from human religious rituals or legalistic requirements.

It is one thing, however, to understand that

...God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ], and

through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven... (Col. 1:19-20).

It is quite another thing to understand the nature of this union of heaven and earth in the Person of Christ, and to work out, in the details of one's daily life, a proper attitude and relationship towards physical "stuff."

There have been extremes in human history— even in church history— concerning the relationship of spiritual and material realms. The early gnostics, drawing heavily on the Greek philosopher Plato, relegated "things below" to a decidedly second class status, going so far as to deny that the Supreme Being could have created matter or taken upon Himself a nature of human flesh. This complete dichotomy of the physical and spiritual realms, while officially condemned as heresy, has poisoned the stream of church history up to our present day. From the Platonic

view of matter flows such heresies as docetism (denial of Christ's real human nature), Marcionism (denial that the Yahweh of the Old Testament could be the God of the New Testament), and Arianism (denial that Jesus Christ was the incarnation of God). The world-denying ascetic piety of the monasteries had its roots in the Platonic viewpoint. On the opposite extreme is the "health and wealth gospel," which emphasizes the "here and now" almost to the exclusion of any transcendent or eschatological hope, and equates salvation with material prosperity and physical well-being.

Because Christians acknowledge Abraham as the spiritual "father of the faithful," we must look to him in considering any question about living by faith. Abraham received from God a most remarkable promise, having two main aspects. The first dealt with things temporal, tangible, and physical:

"I will make you into a great nation..." (Gen. 12:2).

"The whole land of Canaan where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God" (Gen. 17:8).

The second had to do with things eternal, transcendent, and spiritual:

"...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3).

"...and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed..." (Gen. 22:18).

Abraham did not despise the physical (nation-land) aspect of God's promise. He earnestly longed for the promised heir who would be born of his own union with Sarah, his wife. He was sufficiently concerned about the land promise to request from God a sign that his descendants would indeed inherit it. But neither Old nor New Testament allows us to understand

that Abraham saw the nation-land aspect of the promise as its essence; it was valued by Abraham as the means to a higher end: the blessing of *all* nations through the nation that would inherit the land of Canaan. This is obvious not only from the fact that Abraham himself entertained no hope of seeing the fulfillment of the nation-land aspect in his lifetime, but from the equally important fact that he personally experienced and enjoyed the spiritual benefits of righteousness by faith which would one day come to all believers through his physical descendant, Jesus the Christ:

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you" (Gal 3:8).

"Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and rejoiced" (John 8:56).

From Abraham, the believer, God's faithful people learn to neither

despise the earthly and the physical, nor to worship it. Material and physical benefits must be seen not as an end in themselves, but as means to a higher and eternal end, as Abraham's Descendant *par excellence* Himself taught:

"I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Luke 16:9-11).

Let us not jump to Platonic conclusions: In making physical things subservient to higher spiritual ends, Jesus is not despising matter. After all, not only did He create it in the beginning and pronounce it "very good," but He also took upon Himself human flesh (physical nature) for our

salvation. And here is the point: our human nature and the entire physical creation, which was under the condemnation of sin and the curse of death, He redeemed by the glorious resurrection of His own body, a body no longer merely physical, but *metaphysical: spiritual*. He was raised bodily: His tomb was empty and He was touched and handled and tested. But His resurrection body was *more than* physical; though it had flesh and bones and could digest food, it was no longer subject to physical death:

...death no longer has mastery over him (Rom. 6:9).

The physical world is not inherently evil, but it is under a curse of decay. Christ has redeemed it by His cross and resurrection, so that our hope in Christ is not merely a belief in the survival of the non-material aspect of human nature (the Greeks believed in this), but

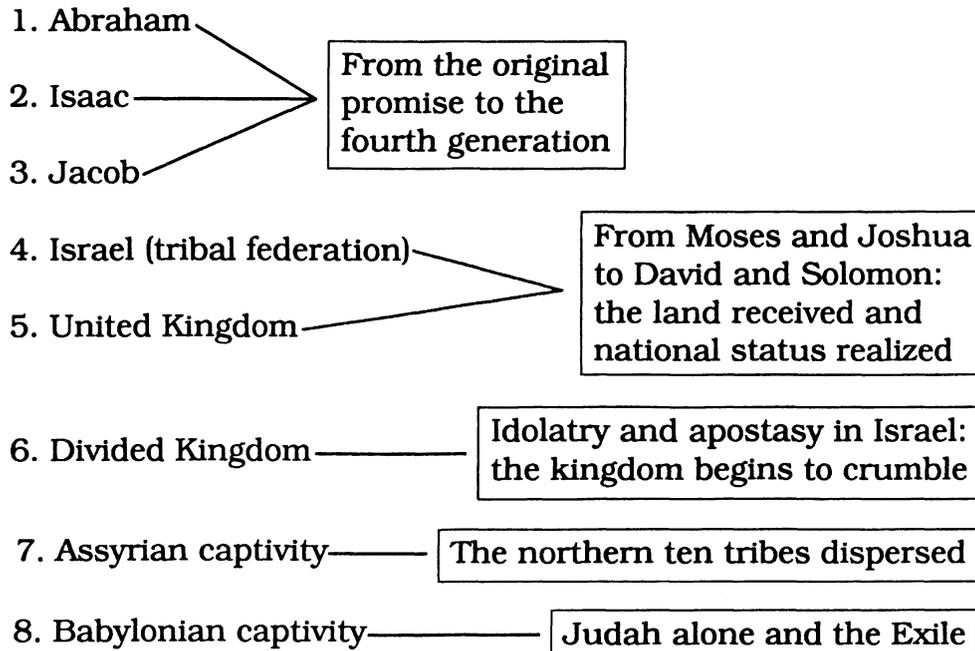
the restoration of integrity to our whole human nature, both body and spirit. Beyond this, we hope for a creation set free from the bondage of decay, a new heaven and new earth in which righteousness will dwell. But if we would be glorified with Christ in the age to come, we must suffer with Him in this present evil age. We must follow in His footsteps and in the footsteps of our father Abraham, who was content to live as a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth, since he was seeking a heavenly country.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54).

The God who made Israel a nation and gave her the promised land can be trusted to give Abraham's spiritual children the fullness of their inheritance in Christ. 

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. This study will begin to trace the historical unfolding of the temporal (nation-land) aspect of God's promise to Abraham.
- B. The following chart outlines that historical unfolding to its fulfillment.



9. Remnant returns

Restoration of the remnant by
decree of Cyrus: the nation-land
aspect of the promise fulfilled

II. PREPARATORY READING

Then the high priest asked him [Stephen], "Are these charges true?" To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.' So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. God spoke to him in this way: 'Your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,' God said, 'and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.' Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

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"Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh King of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace. Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our fathers could not find food. When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers on their first visit. On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Jacob's family. After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died. Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

"As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt. He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die. At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

"When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?' But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

"After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.'

"This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and

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deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert. This is that Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will send you a prophet like me from your own people.' He was in the assembly in the desert, with our fathers and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai; and he received living words to pass on to us. But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. They told Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt—we don't know what has happened to him!' That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honor of what their hands had made. But God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets:

'Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the desert, O house of Israel? You have lifted up the shrine of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.'

"Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. Having received the tabernacle, our fathers under Joshua brought it with

them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built the house for him. However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says:

'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?'" (Acts 7:1-50).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall define the "nation-land" aspect of the Abrahamic promise.**
- B. We will seek to understand the covenant that God made concerning this promise.**

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The original statement of God's promise to Abram defines the nation-land aspect of the promise (read Gen. 12:1-7).**

Notes:

Notes:

1. "I will make you [*i.e.*, Abraham] into a great nation..." (v. 2).

2. "To your offspring I will give this land" (v. 7).

a. Notice that Abraham, at the time God promised to give the land to his offspring, was then in the land that God previously showed him (v. 1).

b. That land was Canaan, the land that Abraham's seed would possess.

B. God made a covenant related to the nation-land aspect of the promise (read Gen. 15:1-21, especially v. 18).

1. Abraham's question: "...how can I know that I will gain possession of it (*i.e.*, the land)?" (v. 8).

2. God's answer: A sign will be given to confirm His promise (vv. 9-17).

- a. Abraham's descendants would be sojourners and slaves in another land (*i.e.*, Egypt) for four hundred years (v. 13).
 - b. Abraham's descendants would return from Egyptian bondage to the promised land "with great possessions (*i.e.*, wealth)" (v. 14).
 - c. God's judgment would fall upon Egypt for their mistreatment of His people (v. 14).
 - d. Neither Abraham nor his descendants would take immediate possession of the land, "...for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (v. 16; compare Gen. 6:5-7; 18:16-33; Lev. 18:24-28; 20:22-24; Deut. 18:9-12; Joel 3:9-13; also read Ps. 89:14; Prov. 14:34; 16:18; Matt. 23:29-36).
3. God's covenant concluded: "On that day the LORD made a covenant with

Notes:

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Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land..." (vv. 17-21).

- a. The symbolism is clear: Yahweh "*passed between the pieces,*" making an oath and thereby confirming His word to Abraham (v. 18; compare Jer. 34:18-19).
- b. The extent of the promised land is given (vv. 18-21; compare Exod. 23:31).

V. CONCLUSION

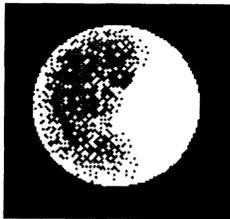
- A. God will bless the world with the means for redemption through the "seed" of Abraham (read Gen. 15:1ff).
 1. However, Abraham's posterity must first become a nation and receive a land.
 2. Notice that the "spiritual-seed" aspect of the promise is repeated within this context (v. 5).

B. The two aspects of the promise are so related as not to destroy the unity of the historical unfolding of God's plan of redemption (see Matt. 1:1-17).

Notes:

29

***THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE COVENANT OF
CIRCUMCISION***



*Abraham's descendants (Israel)
entered into this covenant
relationship with God
acknowledging that
Yahweh was the God
of their father (Abraham),
and also their God.*

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE: THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION



There is little doubt in my mind that a great deal of harm is done by those who insist on addressing inappropriate questions to inappropriate persons on inappropriate occasions. Professional athletes and entertainers are constantly bombarded with inquiries that would be better addressed to statesmen, theologians, and philosophers. This is not to say that only an elite few of us are entitled to a personal opinion on any given issue, nor that the opinions of novices should never be expressed, nor even that such opinions may not occasionally be well worth hearing. My point is that a clear distinction needs to be drawn between the studied opinion of the expert in his field and the ignorant ramblings of the unqualified, and that a burden of responsibility lies with the

inquirer to direct his questions intelligently.

Nowhere is this need for discernment greater than in the field of biblical studies. Because people have tried to force the Bible to answer all sorts of questions that its authors never intended to address, all sorts of foolish and divisive teachings have arisen that bring reproach on the divine Name. Since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it speaks with infallible authority concerning any subject on which it touches. But we must understand that, whatever the Bible may teach concerning anything of cultural or scientific interest, its remarks are always offered within the context of its central theme: the redemption of mankind. There is a need for the study of the arts and sciences precisely because the revelation of God in Christ and in

Scripture deals with only one basic human concern: it gives us the information we need in order to be saved out of a lost and dying world. It was revealed, recorded, and preserved for no other purpose:

...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Within the Bible itself, it is important to address the right questions to the right texts. The abuses of “proof texting” and disregard of context are sufficient warning to any of us who have ever been caught in the embarrassing position of being either the hermeneutical violator or his victim. We don’t want to be made fools of, nor would we intentionally make fools of others.

Yet, when we treat a biblical document such as Paul’s *Epistle to the Romans* as if it were a tract written to show how individual sinners can be saved, we are asking questions of it which would be better put to the *Acts of the Apostles*. I am not denying that the “plan of salvation” is implicitly taught in *Romans*; I am affirming that *Romans* was written, not so much to answer the question, “How can a sinner be saved?” as to respond to the inquiry, “Who are the true people of God?” It is a document born out of the rough and tumble of Paul’s apostolic career, as he dealt with the sincere questions and the belligerent challenges of those to whom he preached his gospel. “How is it,” they demanded to know, “that the God of Abraham is now calling and accepting the uncircumcised into the kingdom that was promised to Israel?”

Paul’s response involves a summary of the theology of

circumcision that is entirely true to the Old Testament teaching. The cutting away of the flesh on the eighth day of life was a visible sign of covenant dedication to God. It symbolized separation from the nations of the world and their idolatrous ways. The eighth day was the beginning of a new week: another "first day," indicating a fresh beginning. In this, circumcision looked forward to the "new birth" which Christ would offer to men and women of all nations. But Paul, following both the law and the prophets, taught that a man who bears the outward mark of righteousness may be spiritually dead inside:

Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised... A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of

the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God (Rom. 2:25, 28-29).

The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live (Deut. 30:6).

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem... (Jer. 4:4).

For Paul, the essence of man's relationship to God is internal, not external. It is a heart of trust in God, like that which Abraham had even before he was circumcised. Abraham's circumcision was a visible sign that he was righteous by faith. Like Abraham ("the father of all who believe"), both circumcised (Jewish) and uncircumcised (Gentile) Christians trust in a God who created everything out of nothing, brings forth life out of death, and keeps His word to His people:

We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them (Rom. 4:9-12).

Righteousness is the legacy of Abraham, but who are his legitimate heirs—those who trust in their own flesh, or those who trust in God and His Word?

*And he [Abraham] is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.... He is our father in the sight of **him whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead** and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and*

*so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that **his body was as good as dead**—since he was about a hundred years old—and that **Sarah's womb was also dead**. Yet he did not waver in unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in **him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead**. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Rom. 4:12, 17-25, emphasis mine; compare Heb. 11:17-19).*

The faith of Abraham and its relationship to circumcision clearly reveal the identity of the "true circumcision," the true covenant people of God: they are those who

...worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3; compare Gal. 6:14-16).

I am saying nothing about the value of "sacraments" in general, nor about baptism in particular. The transition from Old Covenant to New disallows any direct correlation between circumcision and baptism, except that both were initiation rites that marked the beginning of one's membership among God's covenant people. The Christian's "seal of righteousness" is neither circumcision nor baptism, but the indwelling Holy Spirit, who bears His fruit in the believer's life. Circumcision was a covenant sign for one nation (Israel); baptism is to accompany the preaching of Christ's gospel to "all nations." But we can safely transfer the principles of faith's relationship to circumcision to any issue of *sacramentalism*, the placing of trust in outward signs, rituals, or actions. Under both Old

Covenant and New, God is Savior. A covenant sign was a divinely appointed meeting place for the reception of God's blessings. Circumcision was the doorway into the national and temporal blessings of Israel; baptism is the doorway into the universal and eternal blessings of Christ's body, the church. But a doorway is not deity; a point of rendezvous is not a promised Redeemer. In the final analysis, not even the purest faith in God can save a sinner. Only God Himself can do that.

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness (Rom. 4:4-5).



Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. Before continuing our study of the nation-land aspect of the promise, *another covenant* between God and Abraham must be considered.

B. This covenant is the *covenant of circumcision*, recorded in Genesis 17:1-14.

II. PREPARATORY READING

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about— but not before God. What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

Is this blessing only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

Notes:

Notes:

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Rom. 4:1-25).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We desire to understand the purpose and value of the covenant of circumcision.
- B. We shall see the New Testament comments concerning this covenant.

IV. OUTLINE

Notes:

A. The demands (stipulations) of this covenant were explicit (read Gen. 17:4-14).

1. God's obligation: "As for Me..." (vv. 4-8).

a. The spiritual-seed aspect of the promise is noted (vv. 4-5; compare Rom. 4:16-17).

b. The nation-land aspect of the promise is repeated (vv. 6-8).

2. Abram's obligation: "As for you..." (vv. 9-14).

a. "You must keep My covenant..." (which covenant?) (v. 9).

b. "This is My covenant..." (circumcision was the covenant for Abraham and his seed) (v. 10).

Notes:

c. Abraham's seed (Israel) was specifically chosen for a special purpose, and was assigned a particular *sign* to identify them as God's covenant nation (read Gen. 17:7; compare Exod. 19:4-6).

d. The covenant of circumcision was enjoined upon Abraham and his descendants as a *condition* of their retaining the land (vv. 12-14).

B. The duration of this covenant was qualified.

1. It was said to be an "everlasting covenant" (v. 13).

2. How is this term "everlasting," as used here, to be understood?

a. The land also was to have been an "everlasting possession" (v. 8).

b. Obviously, the land was not received as a possession that would never be lost, for they lost it to the Assyrians and Babylonians.

c. The literal rendition of the original Hebrew word means "age-lasting," a term which must be qualified by its contextual application: when the "age" had run its course, it would end.

d. According to the New Testament, the covenant of circumcision is no longer obligatory upon "the seed of Abraham": that covenant has therefore run its intended course (read Rom. 2:28-29; 4:1ff; Phil 3:3; compare Col. 2:11-12; see also Gal. 5:1-12 and compare Acts 15:1ff).

V. CONCLUSION

- A. This covenant ("in your flesh") was given *before* the covenant at Sinai (read Gen. 17:13; compare John 7:22).
- B. This covenant was given to *Abraham* and his *fleshly posterity* (biological descendants).

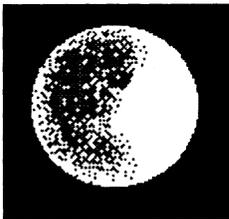
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Notes:

- C. This covenant was to be kept by Abraham's fleshly seed "throughout their generations" (read Gen. 17:9, 12).
- D. This covenant, being fulfilled in fleshly Israel, ran its course.
- E. Now, *in Christ Jesus*, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation" (read Gal. 6:15; compare 1 Cor. 7:18-19; see also Rom. 2:26ff; 2 Cor. 5:16-17).

30

***THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE NATION-LAND
ASPECT FULFILLED***



*We see the fulfillment
of the Abrahamic promise
in his descendants becoming
a nation and the recipients of
a civil and religious law.*

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE: THE NATION-LAND ASPECT FULFILLED



It is fascinating, even for a dabbler like myself, to try and trace the historical roots and development of the world's cultures, customs, and conflicts. Equipped with little more than a questioning mind and a reasonably good set of encyclopedia, one can learn something about the dynasties of the Pharaohs, the philosophers of ancient Greece, the decline of the Roman Empire, the rise of Islam, the shoguns of Japan, and a host of other subjects. Of course, if one's interest in such things goes beyond the broad generalities with which the hobbyist is content, he will have to pursue a more specialized and scholarly study. But what has most intrigued me in my historical dabbings is not any particular subject or fact, but the general observation that there is

no essential difference between biblical and extrabiblical history. One encounters many of the same nations, individuals, and events outside the Bible that one meets within it. Pharaoh Rameses, King Hezekiah, Pontius Pilate, and Jesus Christ are known to both biblical and extrabiblical sources; so are places like Jericho, Babylon, and Nazareth. The seige of Jerusalem by Sennacherib is documented in Assyrian court records, and historians of ancient Rome mention the crucifixion of Jesus. From these and numerous other intersections of history, it began to dawn on me that, whatever was meant by the distinction between "sacred history" and "secular history," it could have nothing to do with the definition of the word "history." History is history, whether it is recorded in the Bible or any other book.

I wonder whether this classification of history into “sacred” and “secular” compartments might represent a subtle kind of prejudice against the Bible as a reliable historical witness, as if certain historians were reminding us that the biblical writers had to be “taken with a grain of salt.” After all, they were men of strong religious persuasion, perhaps suffering under certain delusions, and certainly laboring under definite biases. They were ancient men who were ignorant of modern science, and didn’t seem to understand that the laws of nature can never be broken, even in the most dire of emergencies. And anyway, “separation of church and state” demands that we not place too high a premium on the historical trustworthiness of a religious book in our public institutions—even if we do require our presidents and subpoenaed trial witnesses to swear oaths on it.

The problem with the Bible, you see, is that it testifies of things miraculous. It talks about a God who is not a prisoner of the cosmic order that He created, who has a purpose at work in the world, and who occasionally does embarrassingly unpredictable things to accomplish that purpose. The study of history is complicated enough without bringing an omnipotent deity into the picture.

Still, certain stubborn facts and phenomena of history must be accounted for, and to simply define them out of existence by equating “historical” and “natural” seems an inexcusably lazy sort of solution. For example, consider the nation of Israel: This ancient people, the physical remnants of which are yet with us, must have come from somewhere. “Secular” history generally has no quarrel with the Exodus account, except where it involves miraculous, supernatural intervention—which occurs at practically

every turn in the biblical record. But when the supernatural is completely extracted from Israel's ancient historical record, it is virtually impossible to explain how this enslaved conglomeration of Semitic tribesmen ever managed to escape the clutches of the most powerful empire of their time. Then there's the problem of uniting this miserable mass of refugees into a nation which would function on the basis of law. For Moses and Aaron to have accomplished this without divine help would require a far greater miracle than any recorded in the Exodus account. And how are we to account for the military success of this motley crew against the well established states of Canaan?

But still, we have hardly begun to introduce the historical problem of naturally accounting for Israel's existence—a problem which has profound and urgent significance in understanding the

modern crisis in the Middle East. The Zionists somehow have the idea that Palestine belongs to them by divine decree—a conviction that Bible-believing Christians (even those of us who don't see the modern Zionist state in the Bible) can easily understand. We know that God made a promise to Abraham, the biological forefather of the modern Jews. Part of that promise involved the inheritance of the land of Canaan (now called "Palestine") as a homeland for his descendants. The promise was fulfilled with Joshua's conquests and the expansion of the kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon.

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18).

So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give to their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there.... Not one of

all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed, every one was fulfilled (Josh. 21:43, 45).

So, while we understand the Zionists' insistence on their unique claim to Palestine, they have fallen into the same misunderstanding of God's promises as their ancestors before them. Being physically descended from Abraham guaranteed nothing; it is *faith*, bearing the fruit of obedience, that alone can lay claim to the promises of God:

"But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my name" (2 Chron. 7:19-20; compare Deut. 28-30).

Why did Israel wander in the wilderness for forty years, despite the promise and guidance of God? Why did all but two members of the

original "Exodus generation" fail to inherit the promised land? And why did Israel, having possessed the land of Canaan, fail to maintain their status as a united nation and heirs of the promised land? The answer is the same in each case:

The message they heard [God's promise concerning the land] was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith (Heb. 4:2).

The same nation which balked at the nation-land aspect of the Abrahamic promise and lost it, would later forfeit their spiritual inheritance in Abraham by their disbelief in the Good News about Jesus, the Messiah. Yet, not all of the nation would be cut off from their inheritance; a faithful remnant of Jews would receive their Messiah. Thus, true Israel was never cast off, and through that righteous remnant of Abraham's

physical descendants all the nations of the world have been blessed indeed.

It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring (Rom. 9:6-9; compare Gal. 3:16, 29; John 1:11-13; 3:1-8).



Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. Having stated His promise concerning Abraham's fleshly posterity, God assures Abraham that, although he would not personally inherit the land, his descendants would.

- B. In this lesson we will trace the events related to this aspect of the promise and its fulfillment.

II. PREPARATORY READING

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on the very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites" (Exod. 19:1-6).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM*Notes:*

- A. We want to gain an understanding of the historical development and out-working of the nation-land aspect of God's promise to Abraham, noting God's providential activity from the time of Abraham to the reception of the law of Moses at Mount Sinai.**

- B. We want to follow the narrative of biblical history as Abraham's descendants become**
 - 1. A nation**

 - 2. A theocracy (recipients of a civil and religious law)**

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The promise is renewed to Isaac (read Gen. 26:1-5).**
 - 1. The heir will be Isaac (son of Sarah), not Ishmael (son of Hagar) (see Gal. 4:21-31; Rom. 9:6-9).**

Notes:

2. The heir will be Jacob, not Esau (though both were sons of Isaac) (see Rom. 9:10-13).

B. The promise is restated to Jacob (read Gen. 28:3-4, 13-14).

1. This patriarch signals the beginning of the nation (compare Gen. 32:28).

2. Jacob is the father from whom the nation will get her name, "Israel."

a. Jacob had twelve sons (read Gen. 29:31-30:24; 35:16-26; 49:1-28; 1 Chron. 2:1).

b. These twelve sons headed the twelve tribes of Israel (compare Matt. 19:2; Rev. 21:10-14; Eph. 2:19-20).

C. The twelve families are removed to Egypt (read Gen. 46:1-7).

1. The twelve sons of Jacob (i.e. Israel) are in Egypt due to famine (see Exod. 1:1-7, 20).
 2. During their sojourn in this strange land, they grow into a great multitude (read again Gen. 15:13ff).
 3. Moses is raised up by God to lead His people out of slavery by the mighty hand of Yahweh so that they can possess the promised land (see Exod. 3:1-6:9).
- D. Abraham becomes a great nation (read Exod. 6:7, 16-20, 25-26; compare Deut. 29:12-13).
1. God had originally promised that the people would return to Canaan "in the fourth generation" (see Gen. 15:16).
 2. The generation of Moses and Aaron was the fourth from Jacob (i.e., from the time of Israel's Egyptian residence).

Notes:

Notes:

- a. The birth of — **Levi** marked the first generation.
 - b. The birth of — **Kohath** marked the second generation.
 - c. The birth of — **Amran** marked the third generation.
 - d. The birth of — **Moses** marked the fourth generation.
3. Moses receives the law at Sinai (see Exod. 19:1-6; 20:1-17; 34:27-28).
- a. Israel's becoming a "nation" involved their growth into a large *population* possessing a *law* (Mosaic Covenant) and a *land* (Canaan).
 - b. Israel's law— the law of Moses— was never intended for all nations (i.e., Gentiles) (read Exod. 34:37-38; Deut. 4:1, 5-8; 5:1-5, 15; 33:4; Ps. 147:19-20; Rom. 3:1-2, 19-20).

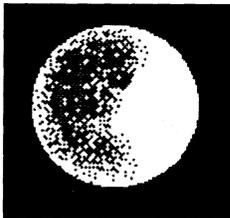
V. CONCLUSION

- A. The nation-land aspect of the promise has been partially fulfilled; only the possessing of the land remains (read Gen. 15:1ff).**
- B. God took nearly five centuries in working out this phase of His eternal purpose.**
- C. In the next two lessons, we will see the nation-land aspect of the Abrahamic promise *completely* fulfilled.**

Notes:

31

***THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE COVENANT OF
BLESSING AND CURSING***



*The receiving of the land
had previously
been conditioned on
the faith of Abraham.
Now, the retaining
of the land
is conditioned upon
the faithfulness of Israel.*

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE: THE COVENANT OF BLESSING AND CURSING



When I was a boy, I used to occasionally become quite resentful toward my parents for their apparently arbitrary and unjustified intrusions into my life. I knew my father and mother to be generally loving and good-natured people; I did not know what to make of some of their silly regulations, which they insisted were being imposed on me for my own good. I could easily understand certain restrictions; sharp knives and matches were obviously hazardous to my health. But why did I have to be in bed at seven o'clock every school night? Why were there certain forbidden words, certain places that were "out of bounds," and certain playmates whose company I was to carefully avoid? Sometimes my parents could explain to me the rationale behind

their decrees; sometimes they could not. But it was only as a grown man who had himself known the joys and burdens of fatherhood that I really began to appreciate what my parents were trying to do. Their years of experience in this world had taught them that certain practices enhance the quality of human life, while certain other practices tend to diminish both the enjoyment and duration of life. Dad and Mom were trying to spare me the pain and problems that life reserves for those who refuse to learn from people who are older and wiser than themselves.

"Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3; compare Deut. 5:16).

It would appear that God, in His wisdom, has built into the structure of the universe certain moral and ethical safeguards which His spiritual offspring may violate only at their own peril. As big birds teach their little ones to fly, so must human parents diligently instruct their children concerning the way that God designed human life to be lived in His universe. The central principle of this Way of Wisdom is respect for authority—beginning with the authority of the Creator Himself, from whom all legitimate authority flows.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Prov. 1:7).

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along, when you lie down and when you get up (Deut. 6:5-7).

People sometimes wonder why God put up with so much foolishness and immorality from His chosen people during the days of the Old Covenant. The behavior of some of Israel's greatest heroes is at times inexcusable—and God never excuses it! He may indeed have *forgiven* the lechery of Samson, the adultery and murder of David, the polygamy, incest, hatred, and other sub-Christian behavior of faithful ancient Hebrews—but He never simply dismissed it. Atonement would be made for their moral failings, and ours, in the fullness of the times; but until then God must work His purpose through a hard-hearted, stiff-necked people called out of an utterly decadent, God-rejecting world. As time went on, God expected to find upon Israel the fruit of righteousness and holiness, growing in ever-increasing abundance. Israel proved to be a disappointing vine, but God is patient; He understands that fruit is not borne overnight, even when

He is the Vinedresser and His Holy Spirit the nourishment.

And so, as Israel stood on the threshold of her promised land, Moses, by the command of God, insisted that she clearly understand what the Lord of the Covenant would be expecting of her as she crossed the Jordan River into Canaan. It was not sinless perfection that God expected to find in Israel—at any rate, not until the fullness of the times. But it was essential that His people be completely and unreservedly loyal to the God who had freed them from slavery and given them His law. Therefore, Moses commanded that, once Israel had occupied the land, her people would once again hear the blessings and the cursings associated with their response to the Mosaic Covenant. The reiteration of those covenant promises would be accomplished in a most remarkable manner: they would be proclaimed from the tops of two mountains that stood on either side of the ancient city of

Shechem, in what would later be called Samaria. It is said that the twin mountains, together with the pass between them, form a kind of natural amphitheater.

Moses commanded the people: When you have crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount Gerazim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. And these tribes shall stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali (Deut. 27:12-13; compare Deut. 11:29; Josh. 8:33-35).

What God had revealed to Israel was not a mere civil law, nor was it simply a religious code. It was primarily and essentially a covenant relationship, a contract similar in many respects to the ancient suzerainty treaties by which powerful overlords would bind themselves to protect and provide for weaker vassals in return for their oaths of allegiance and cooperation. Such treaties always had a

carefully defined formulary, including *parties*, *stipulations*, and *promises*. In the case of the Mosaic Covenant, Israel and Yahweh were the *parties* concerned: they, the vassals, and He, the Overlord. The *stipulations* were the Ten Commandments and the entire body of legislation derived from them, some 613 laws by Jewish reckoning. The *promises* were the blessings and cursings rehearsed from Mount Gerazim and Mount Ebal.¹

I have little way of knowing whether the people of Israel ever felt toward God's covenant stipulations as I sometimes felt toward my parents' rules. I can only wonder if any of them ever questioned certain regulations about the Sabbath, or weaving different fabrics together, or eating only certain foods at certain times and places—especially as the original intent and historical setting of the Mosaic Law became clouded by later developments. I do know that they chafed under the

law, finding it a burden too heavy to bear, because they either forgot or ignored its true spirit:

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the seas, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess (Deut. 30:11-16).

Israel as a nation needed to clearly understand what every boy, girl, man, and woman must come to understand about life: there is

no such thing as absolute independence. The tempting promises of complete moral freedom from God and His ways are empty. Technology may allow us to temporarily breathe underwater like fish or defy gravity like birds, but we always have to land; we eventually must come up for air. Man may seem to be able to live at this present moment without loving God or honoring His will, but the very nature of our being and of the whole created universe guarantees that he cannot ultimately survive—much less, thrive—apart from God. The blessings and cursings associated with God's commandments are not mere artificial, arbitrary attachments; they are inherent in the fabric of our human nature, and of God's world:

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 30:19-20).



¹Mont W. Smith, *What the Bible Says About Covenant* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1981), pp. 12-22.

Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. Before studying the historical period in which Israel received the promised land, we must consider the “covenant of blessing and cursing” (read Deut. 28:1-30:20).
- B. This covenant is made between God and Israel just before the period of conquest led by Joshua (see the biblical Book of Joshua).
- C. This covenant was made in connection with Israel’s renewal of her covenant commitment to God by a second proclamation of the Mosaic Law (read Deut. 26:16-27:26).

II. PREPARATORY READING

*If you fully obey the LORD and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:
You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.*

*The fruit of your womb will be blessed,
and the crops of your land and the
young of your livestock—
the calves of your herds and the
lambs of your flocks.*

*Your basket and your kneading trough
will be blessed.*

*You will be blessed when you come in
and blessed when you go out.*

*The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up
against you will be defeated before you. They will
come at you from one direction but flee from you
in seven. The LORD will send a blessing on your
barns and on everything you put your hand to.
The LORD your God will bless you in the land he
is giving you. The LORD will establish you as his
holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you
keep the commands of the LORD your God and
walk in his ways. Then all the peoples on earth
will see that you are called by the name of the
LORD, and they will fear you. The LORD will
grant you abundant prosperity— in the fruit of
your womb, the young of your livestock and the
crops of your ground— in the land he swore to
your forefathers to give you.*

*The LORD will open the heavens, the store-
house of his bounty, to send rain on your land in
season and to bless all the work of your hands.
You will lend to many nations but will borrow
from none. The LORD will make you the head, not
the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of
the LORD your God that I give you this day and
carefully follow them, you will always be at the*

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top, never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.

However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country.

Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed.

The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds

and the lambs of your flocks.

You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.

The LORD will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him.

Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods— gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your forefathers have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your

life. In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!"—because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. The LORD will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you (Deut. 28:1-20, 64-68).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We want to better appreciate the Bible as the inspired Word of God.
- B. We want to understand the significance of this covenant of blessing and cursing in Israel's retaining of the land that they would possess, and in its impact on the nation for centuries thereafter— even throughout the Babylonian Exile.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. The covenant promises both blessing and cursing (please read the entire text of Deut. 28:1-68).
 - 1. The *blessing* encourages obedience (vv. 1-14).

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- a. Faithfulness to the Mosaic covenant would bring the blessing of *abundance*.
 - b. Consider carefully the *conditional* clauses: "if" (vv. 1, 2, 9, 13; compare Deut. 29:1, 9).
 - c. As the *receiving* of the land had been conditioned on the *faith* of Abraham, so now the *retaining* of the land would be conditioned upon the *faithfulness* of Israel (read Deut. 29:1, 9; compare Gen. 18:18-19; 22:15-18).
2. The *cursing* anticipates disobedience (vv. 15-68).
- a. Unfaithfulness to the Mosaic covenant would bring the curse of *destruction* (read 2 Kings 22:1-23:30).
 - b. The finality of the curse is expressed in the words, "ruin," "destroy," "uproot," and "scatter among all nations" (vv. 63-64).

c. National destruction and captivity are to be the consequences of Israel's disobedience and apostasy (compare Deut 8:17-20).

B. The covenant promises that a remnant will return to the land (see Deut. 30:1-10).

1. The *chronology* of the return: blessing would follow cursing.

a. The blessings and cursings would come upon Israel in her promised land (Canaan) (vv. 1-2).

b. After Israel is scattered among the lands of her captors (the "curse"), the promise of the restoration of a remnant to the promised land would take place (v. 3).

2. The *condition* of the return: Israel's obedience will be a matter of faith and love (see Deut. 30:11-20).

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a. The *retaining* of the land was to be conditioned upon obedience.

b. The *returning* to the land was also conditioned upon obedience (read Deut. 30:1-3).

3. The *characteristics* of the return:
Seven centuries after Moses, the prophets identify a returning remnant (see Jer. 19:1-11 and compare Isa. 1:9; 10:20-22).

a. A great many people of the nation would not return to the land.

b. Only a righteous "remnant" would return.

V. CONCLUSION

A. Moses predicts with perfect accuracy the outcome of Israel's whole national history, even before she inherits the promised land.

1. Israel would possess the land and be blessed in it.

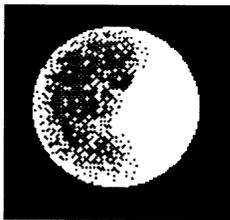
2. However, the nation would apostatize and experience the curse: the end of Solomon's reign signals "the beginning of the end"!

B. God will be faithful to His word in blessing and cursing.

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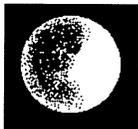
32

***THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE RECEPTION OF
THE PROMISED LAND***



*Realize that Israel's
reception of her land
was based on
God's promise
to "the fathers"
(i.e., Abraham,
Isaac, and Jacob).*

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE: THE RECEPTION OF THE PROMISED LAND



A conscientious parent with no seminary or university training at all probably has a more practical grasp on certain aspects of theology and human psychology than can be acquired within the lecture halls of Westminster or Yale. In my own children, I have noticed an early and apparently instinctive tendency toward the kind of self-interest that motivates human beings to transgress the laws of God and of good psychological health. (I am sure that my own early adventures in manipulative behavior and selfishness far outstripped those of my children, but the budding egoist is never in a position to observe the evolution of his own oppressive career.) One of the most obvious characteristics in the development of the young self is an apparently reflexive response of

“saving face.” The fragile ego must be protected at all costs, from the accusations of a guilty conscience as much as from the embarrassment of public scorn and disgrace. And so we embark on a long and miserable career of rationalization, intent on preserving something we have learned to call our “integrity.”

Early on, we learn to plead ignorance of the law in order to excuse our violations. “Did I not clearly state that your toys are to be put away every night before bedtime?” demands the parent. The child, apparently oblivious to the rhetorical nature of the question, replies: “I don’t know. I can’t remember. Did you?” Unless this tendency is nipped in the bud, the boy who can’t hear his father’s clear instructions will grow up to become the man who never sees the posted speed limit: “I didn’t see the sign,

officer." Who knows what other obligations he may conveniently overlook: his draft notice; his marriage vows; payments to his creditors? In the real world of lawyers, loopholes, and fine print, this approach simply will not do.

Nor does it work well in the world of religion and politics (two subjects I do not intend to avoid, regardless of the dictates of etiquette). The modern Zionist movement (and its religious counterpart, dispensationalism) would have us believe that God's promise of a homeland for Israel had no qualifying conditions or contingencies. But didn't God plainly spell out the conditions under which Israel could inherit and retain the promised land (Deut. 28-30)? And doesn't the Bible record, with equal lucidity, the historical fulfillment of all that He had promised the descendants of Abraham with regard to national and temporal blessings?

So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled (Joshua 21:43-45).

If someone raises the objection that Israel never inherited the entire land area promised to Abraham, we must again direct them to the plain declaration of Scripture:

And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River [Euphrates] to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21; compare Gen. 15:18-21).

Let the matter be laid to rest: neither God nor the nations of the earth owe any land to the modern Jews, under the terms of the

Abrahamic promise. It is difficult to conceive how the Word of God could have stated the point more clearly. The problem is not that God's language has been ambiguous; it is rather that the theological and political rationalizations of some people render them poor hearers. Our dispensationalist friends fail to appreciate that the "nation-land" aspect of God's promise to Abraham was intended to be understood as an integrated unity. It was a prerequisite "first stage" in fulfilling God's ultimate purpose to bless all nations with redemption from sin and death through the Seed of Abraham: the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. The Savior of the world would be born into an identifiable national context, as God had promised. That nation chosen by God to beget the promised Blessing would need a land, a law, a temple, a priesthood, a sacrificial system, and other typical and temporal paraphernalia to ensure the

continuation of their distinct national identity and hope. The fulfillment of the spiritual-seed aspect of the promise (the blessing of all nations in Christ) rendered the entire nation-land economy obsolete. The nation had completed its role in God's eternal purpose of redemption; surely, its paraphernalia (including the land) had also served its purpose.

The fact that God's purpose for the Jewish nation is completed in no way implies that God has nothing left for them. The Messianic hope and blessings are theirs by covenant right, and can be claimed by individual Jews whenever they are ready to receive their Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus). We Gentiles indeed owe a debt to the Jewish people, but it has nothing to do with the nationalistic aspirations of the Zionist movement. From the Jews we have received the Hebrew Scriptures, most of the New Testament Scriptures, and (above all else)

the Messiah Himself. Our appreciation for the role of this people in bringing forth salvation into the world can best be shown by proclaiming to them—with all humility, compassion, and sensitivity—the Messiah promised to them by their God:

Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen (Rom. 9:4-5).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. The promise that God made to Abraham concerning the land of Canaan was to be realized under the leadership of Joshua (“the LORD is salvation”; Greek form: “Jesus”).

B. The sin of the inhabitants of Canaan had now “reached its full measure”: Israel would now possess the land (recall Gen. 15:16).

II. PREPARATORY READING

So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled (Joshua 21:43-45; compare 23:14-16).

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III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall see from the Scriptures that *all* the land that was promised by God to Abraham's descendants was inherited according to the promise.
- B. We will note that this fulfillment is based on God's promise "as He had sworn to their forefathers" (i.e., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) (read Josh. 21:43)
- C. We will deduce that, since Israel possessed her promised land under the leadership of Joshua, any theory or ideology denying that the Jews ever possessed their entire earthly inheritance is erroneous.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Israel received all the land which God had promised them (read Josh. 21:43-45).

1. "So the LORD gave Israel all the land" (v. 43).
 2. "They took possession of it" (v. 43).
 3. "Every [promise] was fulfilled" (v. 45).
 4. "Not one [promise] has failed" (see Josh. 23:14-16).
 - a. Joshua reminded the people that the LORD can be trusted: God has blessed, according to His promise.
 - b. Joshua also warned the people about breaking covenant with the LORD: God will curse (recall Deut. 28:1-30:10).
- B. Israel reigned over all the land which God promised them (read Gen. 15:18-21).
1. "Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River [i.e., the Euphrates] to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt (read 1 Kings 4:21)."

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2. The glorious reign of Solomon graphically portrays God's blessing upon Israel and their possessing of the land.

C. Israel's reception and possession of the promised land (Canaan) was confirmed by Nehemiah the prophet (read Neh. 9:7-8).

1. Nehemiah reviewed the Abrahamic covenant after the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity.

2. After declaring that God had promised to give the land (Canaan) to Abraham's offspring, Nehemiah shows clearly that this promise was fulfilled by saying, "You have kept your promise because you are righteous" (v. 8).

V. CONCLUSION

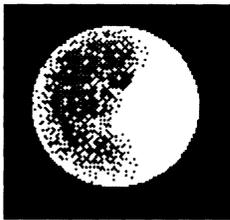
A. At this point in the unfolding of God's purpose, we have seen the fulfillment of the nation-land aspect of the promise to Abraham.

1. Israel, the seed of Abraham, has become a mighty people (nation).
 2. Israel, the seed of Abraham, has received the land of Canaan for an inheritance and possession.
- B. The only thing left for the Jews (Israel) is the *spiritual-seed* aspect of the Abrahamic promise; the *nation-land* (temporal-physical) aspect has been fulfilled.

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33

***THE UNFAITHFUL NATION:
EXILE AND DESTRUCTION***



*All during this time
of unfaithfulness
and overflowing wickedness
God was pleading
with the people
and warning them
to repent.*

THE UNFAITHFUL NATION: EXILE AND DESTRUCTION



The reader may relax: the present essay will have little to say directly about the obvious parallels between Israel's demise and the steep spiritual decline that presently threatens the survival of our own society. My own diatribe on that subject has already exceeded the limits of the purpose of this book and (no doubt) the patience of the reader. More capable apologists have adequately made the relevant points concerning the biblical foundation of our constitutional republic, the continuing wholesale abandonment of that underpinning in favor of arbitrary law and situation ethics, and the disastrous effects this has produced on the stability of our whole social order. There are other and (I think) subtler applications that have not received sufficient

attention—at least insofar as I am aware—and I would address my remarks to them.

The end of Israel's national existence began when the hidden internal rot of her moral and spiritual life caused an irreparable breach in the unity of the kingdom. Solomon's idolatry, materialistic excessiveness, and political ambition had worked together to alienate the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (both loyal to the house of David) from the northern ten tribes. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, inherited his father's political powder keg; unfortunately, he did not inherit his father's celebrated wisdom:

When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tent, O Israel!"

Look after your own house, O David!" (1 Kings 12:16)

Jeroboam son of Nebat, an enemy of the house of David who had been exiled by Solomon, returned after Solomon's death to assume leadership of the ten tribes. In order to sway the allegiance of his people away from Jerusalem, where the throne of David was located, Jeroboam's first official act as king of the northern tribes was to sever all religious ties with Jerusalem. He set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel, appointed a non-Levitical priesthood, and instituted his own religious calendar and sacrificial system to rival the worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:26-33; 2 Chron. 11:13-17). This had the immediate effect of drawing Israel's legitimate priests and Levites toward Jerusalem, since all genuine devotion to Yahweh centered there. Thus, the same sin that weakened Jeroboam's kingdom and brought about its eventual

downfall served to strengthen the rule of Rehoboam over Judah, for it was Yahweh's unchangeable purpose to eternally establish the throne of David (1 Kings 12:29-39; 2 Sam. 7:1-29; Ps. 89). And so, while both northern and southern kingdoms had the same number of kings (nineteen), Israel's political instability brought her nine changes of dynasty, while Judah's throne remained with the house of David.

Judah's faithfulness to Yahweh was short-lived, however; the seeds of idolatry planted by Solomon eventually took firm root in Jerusalem. The apostasy of Israel, full-blown in the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, was exported to Judah through the marriage of King Jehoram to Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah. The northern kingdom, bereft of the Davidic hope and the true religion of the Jerusalem temple, was overthrown and its population deported, despite the powerful ministries of prophets like

Elijah, Elisha, and Amos. Judah, blessed with genuine revealed religion, the Davidic covenant, and strong support from the prophets, outlived Israel by about 130 years. Then they, too, experienced the curses pronounced by the law of Moses on the apostate nation: their kingdom was devastated, their temple razed to the ground, and their population exiled to Babylon by the Chaldean king, Nebuchadnezzar.

There would be a restoration of a faithful remnant of Israel to their promised land under the reign of the Medes and Persians some seventy years after the beginning of the Babylonian captivity of Judah. This had been promised in the Law and described by the prophets. However, the scope of this restoration, both in size and splendor, caused many Jews to doubt that their hope for a messianic kingdom of peace, prosperity, power, and holiness could be attained by their

national or political power. In spite of a brief season of liberation from Gentile domination under the leadership of the Maccabees, the national glory of Israel had all but died out, although the hope of a messianic kingdom to be ruled by a son of David remained very much alive.

And now we have come to my point: it seems to me that the situation of Christians trying to live "in the world but not of the world" as they await the second coming of Christ is in many ways parallel to that of the Jews who looked forward to the coming of Messiah and His reign over God's kingdom. We can identify at least three distinct attitudes among the Jews toward the promised messianic kingdom.

There were the *pragmatists* who were not inclined to wait for God to act. These were of two types: the *publicans and sinners*, who were so absorbed with worldly concerns that they had no place in their lives

for institutional religion; and the *political activists* (such as the Herodians, the Zealots, and the Sadducees), who schemed to make the kingdom of heaven appear by means of alliances, collaborations, or revolutionary activity. The pragmatists stressed that Israel must make its own future and strive to find happiness in the present world.

Then there were the *separatists*, represented by the mainline orthodoxy of the Pharisees, and by such exotic, ascetic, and mystical parties as the Essenes and the apocalyptists. To varying degrees, the separatists advocated a policy of quarantine from the contaminating influences of the world. The more extreme elements were content to completely retreat from society and wait for God's dramatic intervention. The world was seen as a sinking ship which had better be abandoned and left to its own end.

Finally, we come to the true *prophetic tradition*, in which Jesus

and the apostles were to walk. The prophets and those who followed them knew that no amount of human effort could usher in the kingdom of God. Nonetheless, God's people are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. God's kingdom must work in and through His obedient people, permeating human society like leaven in a lump of dough, preparing the way for the coming King.

Many students of Scripture have struggled to find the balance that would enable them to comprehend those passages that speak of a gradual appearing of God's kingdom alongside those that affirm a sudden appearing. As we await the return of Christ, should we be pragmatists whose hope is really in the political, social, and economic systems of this present world? Can we seize the kingdom of God by violence? Or should we perhaps be separatists, watching the flow of human history as disinterested

spectators who have no personal interest in the contest? Does our participation or abstinence mean nothing in the final outcome?

The kingdom of God is advanced by the work of the church in history. Our efforts, both as individual members and as a collective body, push upward to meet the climactic inbreaking of the kingdom from above. Human toil will not produce the kingdom of God; but when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth? Will there be a faithful remnant who will be looking eagerly for the Day of the Lord, knowing that their toil in the Lord is not in vain? Will the King's stewards be found going about His business when He comes?

Let us not confuse a political movement with the mission of the church, nor equate the objectives of God's kingdom with any social agenda or economic theory. The kingdom of God will not be attained

through earthly or nationalistic means. But neither let us be deluded by the false notion, so popular in this decadent era, that a person's religion is merely "what he does with his solitude." There is work to be done.

A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isa. 40:3).



Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. The Israelite nation experienced an era of unity under the leadership of its first three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon.

- B. However, the united kingdom divided, circa 931 B.C.

II. PREPARATORY READING

When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all

your heart and with all your soul, and live. The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today. Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea and get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

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But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 30:1-20).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall see the fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses, as stated in Deuteronomy 28:1-30:20.
- B. We shall follow the remainder of Israel's history as an independent nation to its end: unfaithfulness, apostasy, and idolatry are to be followed by deportation and destruction.

IV. OUTLINE*Notes:*

A. The united kingdom of Israel is divided (read 2 Kings 11-12).

1. The empire is divided into two kingdoms (see J.P. Free, *Archeology and Bible History*, p. 179).

a. The northern kingdom is called *Israel*: Jeroboam son of Nebat is king in Shechem (though the capital is later moved to Samaria).

b. The southern kingdom is called *Judah*: Rehoboam son of Solomon is king in Jerusalem (which lies within the territory of Benjamin).

2. As are all other nations, the covenant nation is righteously judged: national division, political corruption, and religious apostasy inevitably lead to ruin (see Amos 9:7-8; compare Prov. 14:34).

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3. During this period of unfaithfulness and overflowing wickedness, God was pleading with His people through the prophets, warning them to repent (see 2 Kings 17:7-23; 2 Chron. 36:15-21).

B. Deportation and destruction of the northern kingdom: God judges Israel by means of the Assyrian captivity (722 B.C.).

1. The sin of Jeroboam son of Nebat was the idolatrous worship of the two calves: "And this thing became a sin..." (see 1 Kings 12:25-33; compare 1 Kings 13:33-34; 14:16; 15:30, 34; 16:2, 19, 31; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:21-23; 23:15).

a. This is the beginning of national destruction due to disobedience (review Deut. 28-30).

b. God keeps His word: The scattering of Israel soon follows.

2. The siege of Samaria (the capital city of the northern kingdom) and the carrying off of Israel into captivity was accomplished by the Assyrians (see 2 Kings 17:1-6, 18).
 - a. For the northern ten tribes, the covenant of cursing became a terrifying reality (read Deut. 28:15, 63-64).
 - b. "Only the tribe of Judah was left" (read 2 Kings 17:18).
- C. Deportation and destruction of the southern kingdom: God judges Judah by means of the Babylonian captivity (605-586 B.C.).
 1. After the invasion of Israel by Assyria, Judah continued to be faithful to the LORD because of a *good king* and a *great prophet* (see 2 Kings 18-20; compare Isa. 36:1-39:8).
 - a. The king was *Hezekiah*.
 - b. The prophet was *Isaiah*.

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2. However, Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, carried Judah into idolatry for about fifty years (see 2 Kings 21:1-18; compare 2 Chron. 33:10-20).
3. The fall and deportation of Judah:
The fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.) shifts world power from Assyria to Babylon (see Nahum 1-3; compare Hab. 1-3).
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar's first siege (606 B.C.): King Jehoiakim rebels and hostages are taken (read 2 Kings 24:1-7; compare Jer. 22:18-19; Dan. 1:1).
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar's second siege (597 B.C.): King Jehoiachin is exiled to Babylon and Zedekiah is installed (read 2 Kings 24:8-20; compare Jer. 22:24-30; Ezek. 1:1-3).

- c. Nebuchadnezzar's third siege (586 B.C.): Jerusalem is devastated and sacked, the temple razed, and much of the population deported (read 2 Kings 24:17-25:12; compare Jer. 21:1-10; 34:1-5; 38:17-18; 39:1-10; 2 Chron. 36:17-21).

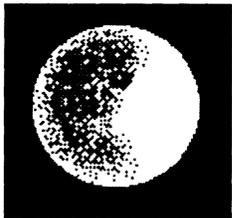
V. CONCLUSION

- A. The curse and ultimate doom have come upon Israel (review Deut. 30).
- B. The LORD has departed: the nation is dead.
- C. Although the nation of Israel is dead, God's promise is not: The seed line of the Messiah-Redeemer will be preserved throughout seventy years of exile, for a remnant shall return to the promised land (read Jer. 25:1-14; 27:21-22; 32:1-33:26; Ezek. 37:1ff).

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34

*THE PRESERVATION
AND RESTORATION
OF THE REMNANT*



*Ezra records
that the remnant
actually returned.
There is no
biblical basis for a
“lost ten tribes” theory.*

THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE REMNANT



The word "remnant" is an important term to anyone who would understand God's dealings with the human race. It is conceptually related to the theological idea known as 'election.' The careless abuse of this biblical concept by some who have had theological axes to grind has caused many Christians to shy away from the whole subject of election, erroneously believing it to be the exclusive province of self-righteous fanatics. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible clearly teaches that God sovereignly chose Noah, saving both him and his family from the great Flood. God later chose Abram, calling him out of a polytheistic environment to become the father of a great monotheistic nation, through which His own Son would become flesh

for the salvation of believers from all nations. The 'elect' are indeed a 'remnant' of the larger mass from which they are called out.

On the other hand, God's sovereignty in election is never divorced from the righteousness of His nature; had there been but ten righteous in Sodom, the whole city would have been spared from destruction, for the Judge of all the earth will do what is right (Gen. 18:25). This means that, while God's decision to choose anyone to be saved or otherwise blessed lies solely within His own prerogative as God Most High, that choice is never made arbitrarily. God does whatever He wants to do, but He always wants to do what is right and just. He is under no obligation to bless or save anyone at all (as He was under no compulsion to create anything); but if He does so, it will be done in

righteousness. Thus, He saved Joshua and Caleb from death in the wilderness, while the rest of their generation deservedly perished for their deliberate unbelief. Almost a millennium later, He would again save a remnant for Himself. Both Israel and Judah had gone into exile for their blatant spiritual adultery against Yahweh; however in accordance with the words of Moses and the prophets, and against all natural probability, a small company of penitent Israelites returned to Jerusalem, resettled its environs, and rebuilt its walls. They also, in spite of spiritual affliction within and political opposition without, reinstated the priests and Levites (an incidental proof that Judah was not the only identifiable tribe to return), built another temple, and resumed their national religious life.

Mankind has long understood that there exists something real and external to itself which must be

respected if plans are to succeed and meaning in life is to be realized. The Bible identifies this Ultimate Reality as, not a mere force or principle, but the infinite, personal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He has planned a purpose of redemption for mankind, acted in history to accomplish that purpose, manifested that purpose in the fullness of the times, and proclaimed that purpose through prophets, apostles, and evangelists. It is one's response to that proclamation (in the gospel of Christ) that determines whether he or she will be among God's 'elect,' the righteous remnant. This is why the bulk of national Israel, though first in line for the messianic blessings by covenant right, were "cut off" from their appointed salvation; only a remnant of the nation believed the gospel:

"For Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he

tells you. *Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.' ...And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways"* (Acts 3:22-23, 25-26).

Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will be saved..." (Rom. 9:27; compare Isa. 10:22-23).

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed" (Matt. 21:42-44; compare Ps. 118:22-23).

The experience of Israel in exile and restoration should have reminded that nation— as it should remind Christians today— of the theology of election and remnant. As there had always been an Israel within 'Israel,' so there is a church within 'the church.' Membership among God's covenant people has always meant more than a mere listing on a genealogical table— or a church membership roll. God is sovereign: He will work His purpose with us or without us. If we refuse to be part of His solution, we will be dealt with as part of the problem. He will give our inheritance to others who will gladly respond to His purpose.

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off (Rom. 11:22).

But we have good reason to conclude our reflections on a positive note. The elect of God are not left alone amidst the hostilities of this present world:

The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment... (2 Peter 2:9).

Our Lord Himself seemed to doubt that His chosen, faithful remnant could ultimately be defrauded of their prize:

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible (Matt. 24:25).

The Lord has sovereignly declared that He will save His elect remnant in Christ. He can be trusted to do so, for He has proven Himself able to keep that which is entrusted to His care (2 Tim. 1:12; 4:6-8, 18; Jude 24). He who preserved the household of Noah from the

Deluge, who brought Joshua and Caleb into the promised land, who gathered the scattered remnant of Israel back to their homeland, can be relied on to care for His elect who cry to Him day and night (Luke 18:1-8). What God was to His remnant in the wilderness and in the Exile, He is to those who today are “strangers and exiles in the world” (1 Peter 1:1-2; 2:12; Heb. 13:14).

Who will ultimately overcome the tribulations of this present world and stand before the throne of God as His chosen remnant? What is their number, and what are their names, who have been enrolled in the Lamb’s Book of Life from before the foundation of the world (Rev. 7:1ff; 14:1-5; 13:8)? We cannot know the secret things of God, but what has been revealed is sufficient to assure us that, if we are willing to be among the chosen remnant, no power in all of creation will be able to keep us out (Rom. 8:28-39; Rev. 12:11). In the meantime, the

only way to “make our calling and election sure” is by dedicating ourselves, entirely and without compromise, to the purpose of God in Christ:

Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness" (2 Tim. 2:19; compare 2 Peter 1:5-11).



Notes:

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. *Moses and Joshua* had warned the people of Israel, even before they inherited the promised land, that captivity and exile would be the result of apostasy: *the people are exiled.*

B. *The prophets* also warned of impending doom and national catastrophe: *it came to pass.*

II. PREPARATORY READING

Therefore the Lord Almighty says this: "Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of

the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever" (Jer. 25:8-12).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall establish that the return of a remnant is *fulfilled prophecy*.
- B. We shall summarize the nation-land aspect of God's promise to Abraham and his "seed."

IV. OUTLINE

- A. According to prophecy, Babylon's rule was to continue for seventy years (read Jer. 25:8-12).
- B. According to prophecy, the return of the remnant to the promised land would follow seventy years of captivity (read Jer. 29:10-14; compare Dan. 9:1-2).
 - 1. Yahweh, by the mouth of Jeremiah, makes the following predictions (see Jer. 29:10-14).

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- a. "I will come to you" (v. 10).
 - b. "[I will] fulfill My gracious promise to bring you back to this place [i.e., Jerusalem]" (v. 10).
 - c. "I will be found by you" (v. 14).
 - d. "[I will] bring you back from captivity" (v. 14).
 - e. "I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you" (v. 14).
 - f. "[I will] bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile" (v. 14; compare Deut. 30:1-4).
2. Yahweh promised a return from exile.
- a. That *return* would involve only a remnant.
 - b. That *remnant* would return after seventy years of captivity.

c. That return *having taken place* under the decree of Cyrus the Mede (536 B.C.), all of God's promises regarding Israel's "nation-land" inheritance have been fulfilled.

C. Prophecy was fulfilled: a remnant returned (read Ezra 9:5-15).

1. Ezra's record describes two returns to the land.

a. The first group returned in 536 B.C. with Zerubbabel the governor (read Ezra 1:1-3, 11).

b. The second group returned in 458 B.C. with Ezra the scribe (read Ezra 7:1-9).

2. Nehemiah's record describes a remnant returning under his personal leadership in 445 B.C. (read Neh. 1:3, 8-10).

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3. Haggai's prophecy describes the spiritual condition of the remnant and the rebuilding of the temple, in 520 B.C. (read Hag. 1:2-3, 12-14; compare Ezra 5:1-2).

V. CONCLUSION

- A. God's promises to Abraham concerning the nation and land have been fulfilled.
- B. The promise to restore a penitent remnant after apostasy and exile has also taken place.
 1. *Moses* had stated the condition of the return: repentance.
 2. *Isaiah* (and other prophets) had prophesied that only a remnant of the nation would return to the land.
 3. *Jeremiah* had revealed that the remnant would return after seventy years of exile.

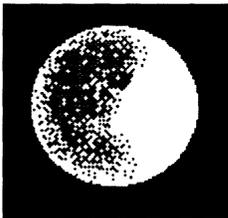
4. *Ezra* declared that a remnant of the whole nation (represented by twelve sin offerings) had returned, leaving no place for a "lost ten tribes" theory as proposed by some dispensationalists and other interpreters (see *Ezra* 6:16-18).

C. God has promised nothing more of a physical, temporal, or national nature to the Jewish people: Redemption from sin in Jesus the Messiah (and every spiritual blessing in Him) is the Lord God's offer to all of humanity today.

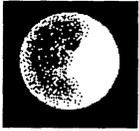
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***THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE SPIRITUAL-SEED
ASPECT (Part I)***



*The salvation of
the faithful Noah
(and all other Old Testament
persons of faith)
hinged upon the fulfillment
of God's prophecy in Eden.
Without that fulfillment
no one could be redeemed
from sin and death.*

**THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE SPIRITUAL-SEED
ASPECT (Part I)**

If I were the Devil, hating all that God is and opposing everything He does, and if I had failed to prevent God's promise of salvation from being fulfilled in the fullness of His time, I suppose I should have to redirect my attack away from external historical phenomena and toward the subjective concerns of the human mind. A salvation that is misunderstood, or (better still) ignored, or (best of all) rejected outright is as impotent to redeem as no salvation at all. Having botched every attempt to thwart God's purpose of redemption from reaching fruition through Adam and Eve, Abel, Noah, Abraham, the nation of Israel, and the lineage of David, I would concentrate on cultivating ignorance, prejudice, unbelief, and antagonism toward the message of

that redemption. Through a carefully orchestrated program of cultural brainwashing and distortion of truth, one might succeed in "fooling most of the people most of the time." A gospel of an open tomb is of no value to a closed mind.

The masses could be controlled easily enough through the all-pervasive influence of public education and the "media elite," a small but powerful circle of social planners who decide which causes and viewpoints will be considered fashionable in any given season. The greater challenge would be to rout the church, that formidable depository of truth. Unless the church were effectively demoralized, she might at any moment rise up (true to her calling as the "body of Christ") and speak clearly by the power of the Holy Spirit, arousing

multitudes of good and honest hearts from their spiritual stupor. No amount of persecution or worldly seduction could succeed in neutralizing the church if her members were being nourished by the Word of God. The Satanic strategy against the church must therefore depend largely on undermining the authority of Scripture among God's people.

This could be done in a number of ways. A substitution of topical preaching for expository; a "proof text" approach to studies; an existentialist hermeneutic which completely divorces the grammatical-historical meaning of Scripture from its present application in the life of the believer— all of these, and more, could be employed. But these methods are usually symptoms of a deeper disrespect for Scripture that manifests itself in careless treatment of the biblical text. And there is no better way to engender disrespect for biblical authority than

to conceive of the Bible as merely an arbitrary collection of obscure ancient texts, having no central theme or overarching purpose. Against this viewpoint, the witness of Scripture concerning itself stands in sharp contrast:

[Jesus] said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27; compare vv. 44-47).

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures... (Rom. 1:1-2; compare 16:25-27).

From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through

faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

These and many other texts testify to the essential unity of the whole Bible as the Word of the one true God. Not only this, but the continuity of biblical teaching, from Genesis to Revelation, is affirmed—a continuity which culminates in the “Christ event,” the coming of the promised Messiah to bring salvation from God to mankind. Furthermore, the constant recurrence in the New Testament of Old Testament “fulfillment” formulae such as “in accordance with the Scriptures” and “that it might be fulfilled” shows that there can be no proper appreciation for the person and work of Jesus Christ apart from the testimony of both Old and New Testament Scripture.

It is sometimes assumed that the revelation of God’s redemptive purpose for all mankind begins with His promise to Abraham (“...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you”). But the calling of Abraham and his descendants to become the vehicle of divine blessing for the world can only be understood in light of the history and theology related in the eleven chapters of Genesis that precede the call of Abram. It is from these chapters that we learn of the creation of the universe, of man’s place in the cosmos, of the Fall of the human race through Adam’s disobedience, and of God’s purpose of redemption for mankind. That purpose is first disclosed in the context of God’s decree of doom upon the Serpent, Satan (Rev. 12:9):

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers: he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

Here is the fountainhead of Israel's messianic hope, for it is at this early moment that God first revealed both the defeat of the Serpent and the simultaneous victory of "the seed of woman"—a triumph not merely for Israel (there were no "nations" at this time), but for the whole human race. The historical outworking of this hope involved a process of elections, callings, judgments, and restorations. The decree of victory over the Serpent is the root from which all subsequent redemptive history grows: the preservation of Noah's household from the great Flood, the calling of Abraham, the promise to the Hebrew fathers, the selection of the tribe of Judah and the house of David. Through Abraham, the announcement of redemption became the inheritance of a particular nation, and through David it became the hope of a messianic kingdom. Finally, the New Testament witnesses announced that the

fullness of the times had arrived; the kingdom of God which was at hand had finally been inaugurated; the promised seed of Abraham had indeed brought blessing to all nations; the "seed of woman" had crushed the Serpent's head:

"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:31-32).

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons (Gal. 4:4-5).

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants (Heb. 2:14-16).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. The nation-land aspect of God's promise to Abraham has been fulfilled.

B. Having traced the physical-temporal element of the promise to its fulfillment, we now turn our attention to the central and focal aspect of God's promise to Abraham: the "spiritual seed" aspect.

II. PREPARATORY READING

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with

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her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because

of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:1-24).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall begin tracing the *spiritual-seed* aspect of the promise to its manifestation and fulfillment.
- B. In particular, we shall review and survey God's purpose and promise as seen in the *pre-Abrahamic* period.

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IV. OUTLINE

A. Let us review the promise of redemption.

1. *First*, remember that in eternity, God purposed and predetermined the means of salvation for fallen sinful mankind: *redemption was purposed* (see Eph. 1:3-11).
2. *Second*, recall God's statement in Eden regarding the "seed of woman": *redemption was predicted* (see Gen. 3:15).
3. *Third*, consider the spiritual-seed aspect of God's promise to Abraham ("and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed"): *redemption was promised* (see Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; compare Gal. 3:8-9, 16, 29).

B. Let us recapitulate the pre-Abrahamic period.

1. God's redemptive purpose was disclosed in the days of Adam (see Gen. 3:15-21).
 - a. Here, God announced His intention: the "*seed of woman*" was concerned with *redemption* (read Gen. 3:15; compare Gal. 4:4-5).
 - b. Here, God set forth redemption in *prophecy* and *type* (read Gen. 3:15, 16, 21; compare Heb. 9:11-10:10; John 1:29; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; compare also 1 Cor. 1:30).
2. God's redemptive purpose was at work in the days of Noah (see Gen. 6:1-9:7).
 - a. God's sparing of the righteous Noah and his family was more than the preservation of the human race: God spared the *promised seed* through whom all nations would be blessed.

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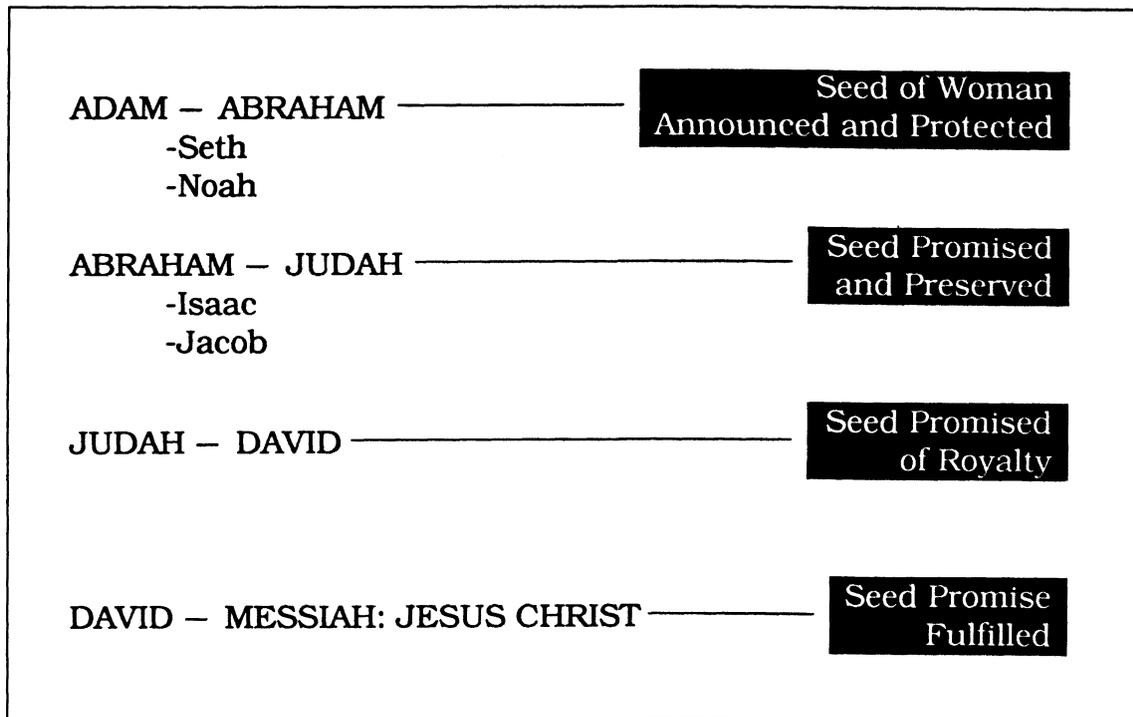
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- b. The salvation of Noah (and all other faithful persons before Christ instituted the New Covenant) hinged upon the fulfillment of God's prophecy in Eden: without that fulfillment, no one could be redeemed from sin and death (read Heb. 9:15-17; compare 11:39-40).
- c. The genealogy of Genesis 11 is recorded to inform us of Abraham's descent from Noah's son, Shem (*"Semitic"*): Abraham, the father of the faithful, will receive God's covenant promise, "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."

V. CONCLUSION

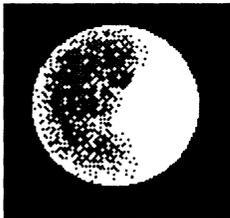
- A. The emphasis of the historical record of the Creation and the Flood is *redemption* (read Gen. 1-11).
- B. That emphasis is underlined by the recorded genealogy showing the preservation of that promised seed lineage.

C. Note the following chart for an overview of the spiritual-seed promise as it relates to prominent historical characters (read Matt. 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38).



36

***THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE SPIRITUAL-SEED
ASPECT (Part II)***



*From Adam to Judah,
Yahweh's concern is
His eternal purpose
of redemption,
which is the theme
throughout the inspired record.*

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE: THE SPIRITUAL-SEED ASPECT (Part II)



Many nations of the world attempt to explain their origins, customs, and cultural peculiarities by referring to certain great personages from whom their national histories supposedly flow. These personages may be as historically concrete as George Washington or as shrouded in myth and legend as Romulus and Remus. The nation Israel, so distinct among the nations of the earth that the term "Gentile" still serves as a collective designation for "non-Jewish," traced its history back to three historical figures who became known as "the fathers": Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hebrew history (as such) begins, not with Adam, nor with Noah, but with Abraham. To explain the existence and distinctive character of their nation, the Israelites looked back to

this man whose most outstanding characteristic was his trust in the God who had called him, separated him from his past cultural ties, and promised him both a national and spiritual heritage. The nation might wander repeatedly from this foundation and lose sight of the legacy of the promise, but that would be in spite of the testimony of the law and the warnings of the prophets:

Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched

arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land..." (Deut. 26:5-11).

It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 9:5).

"But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham..." (Lev. 26:40-42).

Israel was forbidden to indulge in the nationalistic pride that characterized the nations around her. She owed her existence and

prosperity entirely to the God who had chosen to bless Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Although nothing that the Eternal One does can be called "arbitrary," His choice of the Hebrew fathers and their descendents was certainly not a matter of their merits, but of His own gracious initiative. God's determination to enter into covenant relationship with Abraham and his posterity was an entirely free decision on His part. Nothing in Abraham or any of his descendants compelled or obligated God to act, although God does indeed require certain characteristics of anyone He may choose:

"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:18-19; compare 2 Chron. 7:17-22; Matt. 5:1-20; John 4:23-24).

The essential requirement of God for His elect is not to be understood in terms of specific moral practices, but rather in terms of *covenant loyalty*. Ethics are indeed an important element in the covenant, but they are not its essence. Obedience to the specific commandments and stipulations of the covenant must flow out of a heart that is totally devoted, in love and in trust, to God. This is why a deceiver like Jacob could inherit the promise. This is why an egotistical womanizer like Samson could be upheld as a hero of the covenant nation. This is why a man like David could be called "a man after God's own heart," though he had fallen into adultery and murder.¹ And this is how God can smile upon us in Christ Jesus, though our service and devotion to Him is far from flawless. In many ways, the morality that the Old Testament saints offered to God was shockingly sub-Christian. Without compromising

His own standard of absolute righteousness, God was able to work His purpose of redemption through people who were ethically ignorant, weak-willed, and morally degenerate. God is able to improvise, to accommodate the hardness of men's hearts, to work with whomever He must. God has always dealt with man "where he was," in order to gradually bring man to where He wanted him to be. The "spirit of the law," the essence of man's response to God in covenant relationship, has always been a heart that is aligned with God's heart: a love and loyalty that support God's purpose and plans (Deut. 6:4-5; 30:11ff; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Matt. 22:34-40).

This love and loyalty characterized Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Although one may indeed see moral improvement in these men as they grew older and wiser in the knowledge of God, it was their steadfast loyalty to God and trust in His promise that set them apart from the

nations and made them the fathers of the covenant people. Their true descendants are those who have inherited faith, hope, and love toward God through Jesus, the promised Seed of Abraham:

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago (Micah 7:18-20).



¹Mont W. Smith, *What the Bible Says About Covenant*, What the Bible Says Series (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1981), p. 116.

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. There are three Old Testament characters of whom much is said regarding "the promise."

B. Those three men (often called "the fathers") are *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

II. PREPARATORY READING

A. Regarding Abraham:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:1-3).

"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him" (Gen. 18:18).

"I will surely bless you [i.e., Abraham] and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of

Notes:

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their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Gen. 22:17-18).

B. Regarding Isaac:

"Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws" (Gen. 26:3-5).

C. Regarding Jacob:

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the

land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring" (Gen. 28:10-14).

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III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We will view the promise concerning the "spiritual-seed" blessing during the Abraham period (the period of the fathers).
- B. We will recall the original statements of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, also noting Judah's significance in the historical development of the promise.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. God's statements to Abraham show the emphasis of the spiritual-seed promise.
 - 1. Each statement of the spiritual-seed promise to Abraham (noted above) emphasizes that "all nations" of the earth are to be blessed through

Notes:

Abraham (and his offspring): God is determined to bring about His promise of redemption through Abraham.

2. Although Abraham eventually dies, God's promise does not: the heir (Isaac) is born!

B. God's statement to Isaac shows the confirmation of the spiritual-seed promise.

1. Notice that God assures Isaac, "[I] will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham" (read again Gen. 12:1-3; compare 15:1ff).

2. The promise is re-stated to Abraham's son Isaac, as Yahweh says, "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."

C. God's statement to Jacob shows the continuation of the spiritual-seed promise.

1. Here again, at a definite point of time in history, the Lord God Almighty reveals His glorious purpose and promise to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham: the promise flows on toward a national heritage.

 2. The spiritual-seed aspect of the promise is also reiterated to Jacob: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."
- D. Jacob's blessing upon Judah specifies the appointed tribe of the spiritual-seed promise (read Gen. 49:8-10).
1. Judah, one of Jacob's twelve sons, is identified as the tribe through which the royal Seed would come.
 - a. "Judah, your brothers will praise you...": Judah is preeminent in Israel.

Notes:

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b. "The scepter [i.e., *authority; right of rule or judgment*] will not depart from Judah...until He comes to whom it belongs [or, *until Shiloh, meaning "Peace," comes*] and the obedience of the nations is His": The royal Seed is preeminent among all nations.

2. To appreciate the impact of this blessing upon Judah, and its significance as it relates to the promise to Abraham, the following passages should be consulted.

a. Numbers 24:17 (compare Matt. 2:1-2).

b. Micah 5:5 (compare Matt. 2:4-6; Eph. 2:14).

c. Revelation 5:5.

d. Hebrews 7:14.

V. CONCLUSION

- A. The Book of Genesis carefully traces God's purposefully planned and providentially protected *seed of promise* throughout the Abrahamic period of redemptive history.**

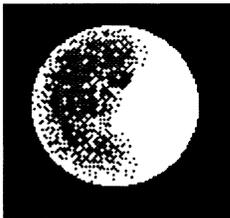
- B. The Genesis record clearly reveals that the living God is in control of human history and caring for His people, from Eden to Egypt.**

- C. From Adam to Judah the Lord's concern is His eternal purpose of redemption, which is also the theme of the entire divinely inspired record.**

Notes:

37

***THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE:
THE SPIRITUAL-SEED
ASPECT (Part III)***



Jesus said...
"My peace I give to you,
I do not give to you
as the world gives"
(John 14:27).

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE: THE SPIRITUAL-SEED ASPECT (Part III)



One of the most challenging aspects of biblical theology is the problem of understanding the relationship between the testaments. Simply stated, the *covenants* define the promises and conditions associated with God's relationship to His people; the *testaments* are those documents of Scripture which record, explain, and develop the covenants. For practical purposes, we are concerned here with two testaments: the Old (which describes the covenant relationships into which God entered with His people in preparation for "the fullness of the time" when His eternal purpose would be realized and revealed), and the New (which describes God's covenant relationship with His people as mediated by His Son, Jesus the Messiah, who fulfills the

promises and hopes of the Old Testament period).

Having generally defined the relationship between the terms "covenant" and "testament," we are still left with the task of formulating an understanding of the relationship between Old Testament and New. Theologians have differed radically in explaining this relationship. Some emphasize the *continuity* between the testaments, and speak of "salvation history" flowing from promise to fulfillment. Others stress *discontinuity*, equating the Old Testament with "law" and the New Testament with "gospel." Both positions are in some sense true, but both are extremist formulations; they go too far in one direction or the other, lacking balance and indulging in overstatement.

That a continuity between the testaments exists is not to be doubted; the same God acts and speaks in both testaments. But the religion of Israel was not Christianity, and the New Covenant people are never defined in terms of a particular nation or land. That Christianity originally grew out of the soil of Judaism is an indisputable fact; the church is "organically" related to Israel. It has inherited the messianic blessings associated with promises which were given to the nation of Israel through the Hebrew patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David).

The physical descendants of Abraham (national Israel) were the "natural branches" of the tree (people of God) rooted in the patriarchal promises. That tree was supposed to bear *spiritual* fruit in the fullness of the times, but most of the natural branches refused to cooperate with God's purpose. God's purpose had utilized a nation and a

land, but most of Israel confused God's means with His ends; they understood the promised blessings only in terms of their own nationalistic aspirations. Rather than submit to God's purpose, they refused to accept His Son as their Messiah, and the blessings of His reign were offered to "all nations" in accordance with God's eternal purpose and His original promise to Abraham (Rom. 11:13-24; Matt. 21:33-46; compare Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Hence, "wild branches" (Gentiles) were "grafted" into Israel's promised blessings in Jesus the Messiah (Christ).

Having made some attempt to compensate for the imbalances of extreme perspectives on the continuity between the two testaments, I must now address the opposite extreme: that of seeing only discontinuity between Old and New Testaments. In responding to those who overstate the unity of the church with national Israel, and of

Christianity with Judaism, let us not go too far. In the second century A.D., the heretic Marcion taught that the Old Testament and its God were not to be identified with the God who has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus. This led him to reject not only the authority and theology of the Old Testament as the Word of God, but also much of the New Testament that he found "too Jewish." Marcion's legacy is yet with us; it may take on forms as despicable as anti-Semitism, or as seemingly innocuous as ignorance of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). However, one need not be a bigot or a Marcionite in order to fall into an extremist view of the discontinuity between the testaments. A simple equating of Old Testament with "law" and New Testament with "gospel" will suffice, for it is clear that the Old Testament contains much "Good News" (however veiled it may be)

and that the New contains many commandments (however nobly motivated our obedience):

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts (Deut. 6:4-6; compare Matt. 22:34-40).

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17).

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you" (Gal. 3:8).

The apparent discrepancies between promise and fulfillment can obscure the continuity between the testaments. The messianic kingdom and blessings that Jesus came to bring to His people were not the

nationalistic, earthly hopes which Israel had been expecting. This was at least partly because the people had wandered from the way of righteousness, having been seduced by self-righteous hypocrites and misled by self-serving opportunists. The Messiah was to be not only the Son of David, reigning over Israel; He was also to be the seed of Abraham, blessing all believers with forgiveness of sins and the Spirit of sonship. His peace would not be like that of King David: a peace won by military conquest and maintained by nationalistic superiority. Yet, the nations would indeed lay down their weapons and submit themselves willingly to the service of a true descendant of David, who would rule not only Israel but the whole creation. His peace would be won by the laying down of His own life so that, in Him, men and women of all nations might be reconciled to the one true God, and to one another. The peace of God can only

flourish when there is peace with God.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed (Isa. 53:5; compare Rom. 5:1).

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing it and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this (Isa. 9:6-7; compare 2:1-4; 11:1-9).

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27; compare Phil. 4:6-7).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- A. In the last lesson we learned that, through Abraham's descendants Isaac and Jacob, God reaffirmed His promise to Abraham: "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."

- B. We also saw the significance of the tribe of Judah in our study of the Abrahamic period.

- C. This lesson is concerned with the importance of the post-Abrahamic period as it relates to the promise.

II. PREPARATORY READING

"The LORD declares to you [i.e., David] that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never

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be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:11-16).

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall come to appreciate the confirmation of the promise to David regarding the “Son of David” who was to come.**
- B. We shall see God’s power in carrying out His good pleasure and purpose unto “the fullness of the times.”**

IV. OUTLINE

- A. David and his “seed” become the means of fulfilling the Abrahamic promise (read 2 Sam. 7:11-16).**
 - 1. God promises to “raise up your offspring to succeed you [i.e., David]” (v. 12).**
 - 2. David’s house (or, family) is chosen by God from the tribe of Judah and the “seed line” continues.**

3. Consider the following chart (see Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:1-4).

Abraham ———→ David ———→ Jesus Christ

Notes:

B. The explanation of the prophecy concerning David and his seed goes beyond the reign of Solomon and transcends the nationalistic aspirations of Israel (read 2 Sam. 7:1-17).

1. David is to be made a "house" (v. 11).

a. This is not a material or spiritual "house," but rather a physical (biological) "house": a royal family, a dynastic lineage (compare 2 Sam. 7:27-28).

b. David's fleshly offspring would be made a "house" by God (see Heb. 11:7 [AV] for a similar usage of "house").

2. From David's house, a specific "seed" (descendant) is identified (vv. 12-17).

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- a. His kingdom will be established forever by the LORD (vv. 12-13).
 - b. His descent would be from the lineage of David (v. 12).
 - c. He would build a house for the LORD's Name (v. 13).
 - d. His Father would be God Himself (v. 14).
3. David's son Solomon typifies this promised "seed" (vv. 11-13; compare vv. 14-16).
- a. Solomon was David's son (offspring, descendant, or "seed") by Bathsheba (read 2 Sam. 12:24-25; Matt. 1:6).
 - b. Solomon was established by the LORD upon David's throne (not "forever," however) (read 1 Kings 2:12; compare Luke 1:26-33).
 - c. Solomon built a "house" for the LORD (read 1 Kings 6:1ff).

d. Solomon is a 'type' of Christ, as shown by the following chart (read 2 Sam. 7:11-17).

Solomon	Christ Jesus
1) He was David's seed.	1) He is of David's seed (Rom. 1:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:8).
2) He sat on David's throne.	2) He sits on David's throne (Acts 2:30-31).
3) His kingdom was established.	3) His kingdom is established forever (2 Sam. 7:16; compare Col. 1:13-14; Rev. 5:9-10; Eph. 5:5; Heb. 12:28).
4) He built God's house.	4) He built God's house, the church (Matt. 16:16; compare Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15).

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V. CONCLUSION

A. The prophets spoke of this messianic hope which would emerge from David's seed and reign on his throne (read 1 Peter 1:10-12).

1. From Isaiah 9:6-7 we learn that

a. A result of His government would be *peace* (see Isa. 2:1-4; 11:1-9)

b. *Peace* would be a continuous element in His endless reign

c. *Peace* would be established by a *King of Peace* in a *kingdom of peace* "upon the throne of David"

d. The peace of His kingdom is not peace as the world gives (read John 14:27; Eph. 2:14ff; Isa. 53:5; Micah 5:2-5; Rom. 5:1-11; Col. 1:20; compare 1 Peter 1:18-20)

2. From Jeremiah 33:15-26 we understand that

- a. A *branch* (or *shoot*) is a separate growth coming from a *root* (i.e., from the tree of David)

- b. The figure of the “branch” is distinctly messianic (read Isa. 11:1ff; Jer. 23:5-6; Zech. 6:12-14; compare Rev. 22:16)

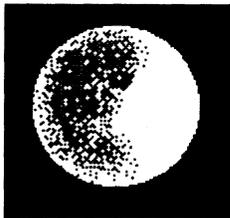
- B. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the birth of that “Seed of David” who is also the “Righteous Branch” (read Isa. 7:14; compare Matt. 1:18-23).

- C. “The fullness of the times” had come when Jesus Christ, Son of David, was born of a woman (read Gal. 4:4-5; compare Luke 1:26-33, 68-75).

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38

***THE PROMISE: ITS GOAL
AND FULFILLMENT
IN CHRIST***



*In Christ Jesus is realized:
the seed of woman,
the seed of Abraham,
Isaac and Jacob,
and the seed of David.*

***THE PROMISE: ITS GOAL
AND FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST***

When a man or a woman becomes sufficiently convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and Israel's promised Messiah, life's biggest and most urgent issues are resolved for that individual. Trusting Christ to answer the most important questions, we may also reasonably trust His authority in those less pressing but nonetheless troubling matters. Once one swallows (not gullibly!) a metaphysical camel such as the historical resurrection, it is foolish to strain out such gnats as Christ's belief in demons and in the inerrant divine authority of the whole Bible. The Lord's credentials are far more impressive than those of any materialistic scientist, philosopher, or theologian with whom I am familiar. His pronouncements on any issue will carry more weight

with His true disciples than the most self-assured decrees of His critics.

All of this is probably obvious to any true Christian who has taken time to think through the implications of Christ's lordship over his or her intellectual life. But submission to the lordship of Christ over one's intellect hardly excuses one from the obligation to wrestle with intellectual difficulties and challenges posed by the secular mindset that surrounds us. Indeed, when the apostle commanded Christians to be prepared to defend their faith before "everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have," he presumably was not excluding the questions of social revolutionaries, skeptical scientists, antagonistic philosophers, or even unbelieving theologians (1 Peter 3:15). What-

ever we may believe Jesus meant by "casting pearls before swine," we may be sure He did not mean that honest questions don't deserve honest answers, nor that swine may be known by the questions they ask. I have been a disciple of Jesus Christ for several years and am still far from resolving every ethical, philosophical, and scientific question in my mind. In fact, becoming a Christian has presented certain intellectual difficulties I did not have to face as an unbeliever (although Christianity has obviously solved more problems for me than it has raised). But it is one thing to honestly admit ignorance about a particular matter, in hope that the light which has shone in the middle of one's room may one day permeate the dark corners; it is another thing to struggle in absolute darkness with no certainty that morning will ever come.

Many biblical verses remain shadowy to me, but there has arisen

in my heart a Morning Star which is daily illuminating more and more of those darkened passages. Jesus enlightens the mind to understand the whole of Scripture, for whether in promise or in fulfillment, both testaments bear witness to Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; John 5:39-40, 46-47; 2 Cor. 3:13-16). For example, once I could make little sense of David's explanation as to why he himself was disqualified by God for building the temple, while Solomon his son was chosen for that task:

King David rose to his feet and said, "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD.... But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my name, because you are a warrior and have shed much blood'" (1 Chron. 28:2-3).

"Well, here's a fine thing," I thought. "God chooses David as His instrument to unite the tribes of

Israel, defeat their enemies in war, and thus secure the borders of the kingdom. Then, because David does as he is told, God refuses him the honor of building the temple!" It was only much later that I understood: God's eternal purpose involves a king who would come from the house of David and who would be known as the "Prince of Peace"—not as a man of war! This Son of David would build a "house" for the Lord God: a "temple" made up of "living stones" from not only the nation of Israel, but every nation under heaven (Matt. 16:18-19; 1 Cor. 3:16-18; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10). Under the reign of this Great King (Messiah), the nations would beat their weapons of destruction into instruments of righteousness, cooperation, and peace (Isa. 2:1-4; Col. 3:5-10). David was the right man for one prophetic picture of Messiah, for he was devoted to the Lord with his whole heart. But Solomon was a type of

the Messiah as Prince of Peace and Builder of the temple of God: the Cornerstone of the Holy Community.

In the Book of Acts we find the apostle Peter using the keys of apostolic authority given him by the Lord, as he opens the New Temple first to the house of Israel (Acts 2), and later, to the Gentiles (Acts 10). In this New Temple, the reign of Jesus the Messiah is already at work in the world, producing peace among people of many different nations and social backgrounds. The Spirit of divine sonship is poured out on young and old, male and female, slave and free. The supernatural powers of the messianic age provide incontrovertible and historical evidence that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated among men by Jesus of Nazareth, the King. Language barriers were miraculously torn down, physical wholeness was restored to the sick, and life to the

dead— all in testimony to the truth that in Jesus Christ and through His gospel, peace has come down from heaven to embrace the earth. Israel's hope was not to be realized in a national monarchy, but in a redeeming Messiah from the lineage of David. In this Seed of Abraham, all nations of the earth would be blessed, and the kingdom that has appeared among men in the person of the King and His Holy Temple will be one day consummated by His appearing in glory at the end of the age.

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you— even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:19-21).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. In the preceding lesson, the emphasis was upon the promise as it was seen throughout the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.

B. We will examine the Abrahamic promise in light of its New Testament fulfillment.

II. PREPARATORY READING

Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him:

'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

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Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

"The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:22-36).

Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you— even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for

you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.' Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:17-26).

Notes:

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall see that the New Testament declares that the fruition and fulfillment of the promise is realized in Christ Jesus.**
- B. We shall read sections of the New Testament that stress the promise and emphasize Jesus of Nazareth as its ultimate fulfillment and goal.**

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Peter declares that Jesus is the goal and fulfillment of the promise.**

Notes:

1. Peter proclaims the “Good News” on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
 - a. *Proposition:* The Messiah has suffered, died, and risen from the dead in accordance with God’s eternal purpose (vv. 22-24).
 - b. *Proof:* The messianic Psalms are evidently fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus (vv. 25-32; compare Pss. 16:8-11; 110:1).
 - c. *Power:* The phenomena associated with the promise of the Spirit on that Pentecost day were the result of Jesus’ action at the right hand of God (v. 33; compare vv. 14-21).
2. Peter proclaims the fulfillment of the promise at Solomon’s Colonnade (Acts 3).
 - a. *Direct declaration:* “God...has glorified his servant *Jesus*” (v. 13).

- b. *Ironic indictment*: “You disowned the *Holy and Righteous One*....You killed the *author of life*” (vv. 14-15).

- c. *Deliberate designation*: “His *Christ* would suffer.... He may send the *Christ* who has been appointed for you— even *Jesus*” (vv. 18, 20).

- d. *Eminent identification*: “For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a *prophet like me*.... Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off’ (vv. 22-23).

- e. *Concluding consummation*: “And you are *heirs...of the covenant* God made.... He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’...When God raised up *his servant*” (vv. 25-26).

B. Paul declares that Jesus is the goal and fulfillment of the promise (read Acts 13:23-39; compare Acts 26:6-23; 28:23-31).

Notes:

Notes:

1. Paul clearly states that the seed of David who appeared according to God's promise is "the Savior Jesus" (v. 23).
2. The apostle declares that the promise is fulfilled and its blessings realized in Jesus, "God's Son" (vv. 32-34; compare Ps. 2:7; Isa. 55:3).
3. Paul (like Peter) identifies Jesus as the "Holy One" (v. 35; compare Ps. 16:10).
4. The apostle concludes that forgiveness of sins and justification are offered "through Jesus" (vv. 38-39).
5. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians should be compared with this sermon (Gal. 3:1ff).
 - a. Paul openly proclaimed the Crucified One, *Jesus Christ* (v. 1).

- b. The expression *Christ* (or *Christ Jesus*) is used seven times in this chapter (vv. 13, 14, 26, 27, 28, 29).

- c. Paul reaches the peak of his discussion when he identifies that *one, single "seed,"* who brings redemption to all nations: *Christ* (vv. 15-19; compare Gen. 22:18; see also Gal. 3:6-9, 13-14, 26-29).

Notes:

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Jesus, the promised Messiah (Greek, *Christ*: "anointed one"), is the goal and fulfillment of the promise made by God to Abraham many centuries beforehand.

- B. In Jesus Christ, God has fulfilled the things promised in the Old Testament: the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets (see Luke 24:25-27, 44-47).

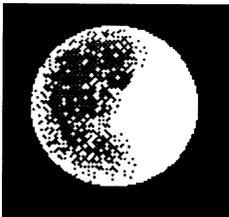
- C. In Jesus Christ (David's "seed") the kingdom and throne of David are eternally established.

Notes:

D. Jesus is the salvation and redemption appointed for all mankind (whether Jew or Gentile), for in Him the blessings of forgiveness of sins and eternal life are bestowed *on the basis of God's immutable and irrevocable promise* (see Acts 2:38-39; compare Acts 10:1-11:18; 15:1-31; Rom. 3:9-4:16; 11:1-24; 15:8-12; Eph. 2:11-22; see also Titus 1:1-3; Heb. 6:17-20 and compare Rom. 11:25-29; Gal. 3:1ff).

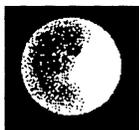
39

***THE PROMISE:
THE BASIS OF OUR HOPE***



*Christ,
the anchor of the soul
established on the
eternal purpose of God,
is the hope
of the faithful.*

THE PROMISE: THE BASIS OF OUR HOPE



Most of us have trouble with abstract thought; we prefer to clothe naked ideas in the conceptual garments of the everyday world. Although a privileged few might be able to make sense of Einstein's theory of relativity by simply deciphering the symbols, " $E=MC^2$," most of us would be better helped by seeing a few "word pictures" and hearing some "concrete descriptions" of its application. I suspect that this has something to do with the way God created us, as a species. We are related to God and can therefore think and reason; but we are also related to a physical environment, and must rely on sensory information and metaphorical thought.

In explaining the relationship of God to man, the Bible offers

us mental pictures such as the relationship of a potter and his clay, a father and his son, a mother and her baby, a man and his wife. We understand concepts like "covenant" and "grace" with much greater clarity when we imagine the situation of the political overlord and his vassals, from which the biblical concept of covenant is developed. When we consider the subject of "faith" as a principle of relationship to God, the Bible does not stop at forensic definitions ("Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see," Heb. 11:1); it goes on to describe the external actions and historical examples by which faith can be recognized (Heb. 11:2ff; James 2:14ff). And wherever there is extensive consideration of faith in the New Testament, the name of Abraham is sure to appear.

By rooting its great ideas in the solid soil of history, the revealed theology of the Hebrew Scriptures avoids the pitfall of subjectivism that has pervaded rationalistic philosophy from the time of the ancient Greeks until our own day. When modern people discuss faith, for example, it is not long before one realizes that nothing more than a psychological experience is being considered. Whether or not anything actually happens, or even exists, outside of one's own head is absolutely irrelevant to the modern discussion of "faith." The intensity of personal conviction and quality of emotional experience are all that matters. Without bothering to try and rehash where this concept of autonomous, irrational "faith" originally came from, I can easily demonstrate that it has no relationship to biblical thought, for the biblical concept of saving faith is rooted in the historical example of Abraham. (Of course, earlier

examples such as Enoch and Noah could be cited, but the biblical teaching about faith undoubtedly begins in earnest with the "father of the faithful.")

To begin with, there existed Something outside of Abram's head. That "Something" identified itself to Abram as a "Someone," a personal God who spoke to Abram, calling him to leave his established social setting and to go wherever God would lead. This Speaking Someone also made promises to Abram about his offspring becoming a nation, inheriting a land, and bringing blessings to all nations. Perhaps at first Abram was responding to what may have been (for all he knew) a mere voice inside his head. We are not told with what objective credentials, if any, the Voice initially came. Perhaps (like another "voice" who prepared the way for Messiah many centuries later) this Voice was at first identified, not by signs and wonders, but

by a tradition of authority and authenticity in which He stood. Adam had heard this Voice; so had Noah. It may be that Abram recognized the Voice from reports such as theirs. In any case, objective verification of the identity of the Voice was not long in coming. The Voice became a Visible Presence who "passed between the pieces" of sacrificial animals, confirming his promise to Abram. Later, Abram's wife Sarai saw the Voice manifested as three men for whom she prepared a meal. When the aged Abram and Sarai (by this time rechristened Abraham and Sarah, in accordance with the promise) actually brought forth the promised heir as the Voice had foretold, there could be no mistaking the identity of the Voice. He was indeed

...The God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17).

With all due respect, I must insist that Abraham would not have trusted an anonymous, mystical "voice" with the outcome of the events that transpired on the mountain of Moriah, when he raised the sacrificial knife over the bound body of his son, Isaac. Because he knew and trusted the voice of God,

He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God has said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death (Heb. 11:17-19).

Abraham's faith was no desperate leap in the dark. It was a *reasoning* faith, a faith that took account of all of the negative factors that ordinary people can see, and also of the one great reality that only faith can see: *God is able!* God can create something out of nothing; God can bring forth a living heir

from a dead womb; God can even raise the dead in order to keep His promise! This is not a conclusion based on ignorance; this is a *fully informed faith* (Rom. 4:16-25).

Dare I "hope against hope," in the midst of this present darkness that is both around me and within my own soul, that God Almighty has indeed washed away every sinful thought, word, and deed I have ever done? Can I face the truth about the desperate situation in which I and the rest of humanity find ourselves at this very moment, and yet honestly hold a reasonable hope that I have a glorious future awaiting me among the sons and daughters of God's kingdom? The Voice in whom Abraham put his trust has proven that He is indeed a God who is able to perform that which He has promised.

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29).



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A. Without hope, man cannot survive: He lives and dies in *hope*.

B. The word *hope*, as is used in Scripture, means "earnest desire and expectation."

II. PREPARATORY READING

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Rom. 4:1-25).

Notes:

Notes:

III. STATEMENT OF AIM

- A. We shall see that *the promise* is that which gives hope to those who have *faith*.
- B. We will come to realize that this *hope* is *Christ Jesus*, whom we must trust and obey.

IV. OUTLINE

- A. Abraham is the father of the faithful (all who trust in God) (read Rom. 4:1-25).
 - 1. The faith of Abraham was credited to him as righteousness (vv. 1-9).
 - 2. This righteousness was credited to Abraham before circumcision (and before the law of Moses) so that he might be “the father of all who believe” (vv. 10-11; compare Gal. 3:6-18).
 - 3. Both Jews (the “circumcision”) and Gentiles (the “uncircumcision”) are

accounted righteous, “who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had...” (v. 12).

4. The promise to Abraham and his seed was not through law, but through the righteousness of faith (vv. 13-15; compare Gal. 3:15-19).
5. The promise was a matter of faith, that it might also be a matter of grace, “and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring” (vv. 16-22; compare Gal. 3:26-29).
6. Righteousness is credited to all “who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (vv. 23-25).

B. Christ Jesus is the hope of the faithful (read Heb. 6:13-14, 17-20; compare Heb. 11:39-40; 12:1-2; 1 Peter 1:21).

1. This hope is based upon God’s promise to Abraham (see Heb. 6:13-17).

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2. This hope is an anchor of the soul, being founded upon God's promise and oath (see Heb. 6:18-20).

3. Jesus, "the author and perfecter of faith," is our hope (see Heb. 11:39-12:2; compare 1 Tim. 1:1).

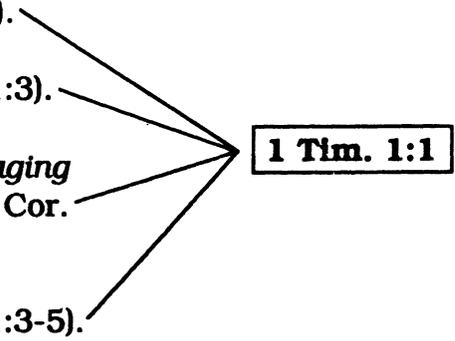
V. CONCLUSION

A. God's eternal purpose and promise are assured in hope to those who have obedient faith in Christ Jesus (read Titus 1:1-4).

B. It is "Christ in you" which is "the hope of glory" (read Col. 1:24-29; compare Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:13-14).

C. If man does not set his hope on Christ, who is man's only hope, he has no hope at all.

1. Christ is our *only* hope (see Acts 4:12).
2. Christ is our *living* hope (see 1 Peter 1:3).
3. Christ is our *enlightening* and *encouraging* hope (see 1 Thess. 5:1-11; compare 1 Cor. 15:56-58; Rom. 8:22-25).
4. Christ is our *practical* hope (see Col. 1:3-5).



1 Tim. 1:1

Thanksgiving and praise to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us access to Life that is full of meaning, purpose, direction, and joy! This life, which is "life indeed," is abundantly available to any and all who will respond in loving trust to God's purpose in His Son, Jesus Christ.

I pray that you may come to know that life personally—that you may partake of it, and enjoy Him forever!



APPENDIX 1

OUTLINE OF THE COURSE

I. God's predetermination in eternity: Redemption has been purposed and planned.

A. 2 Timothy 1:9-10

B. Romans 16:25-26

C. 1 Corinthians 2:7

D. Ephesians 1:3-14

E. Ephesians 3:1-11

F. 1 Peter 1:18-20

G. Romans 8:28-30

II. God's provision in creation: The Bible reveals man's exalted position, his fall, and his need (redemption).

A. The pre-Fall state is described (read Gen. 2).

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B. The Fall is documented (read Gen. 3).

C. The Fall and the law of sin and death are discussed (read Gen. 2:17; compare Rom. 5:12; 8:1-3).

III. God's promise and providence: The Bible presents the unfolding of God's plan of redemption.

A. Redemption history commences with God's *prediction in Eden* (read Gen. 3:15).

B. Redemption history continues with God's two-fold *promise in Haran* (read Gen. 12:1-7; compare 22:17-18).

1. The *nation-land* part: "To your offspring I will give this land."

a. Abraham receives the promise (see Gen. 12:1-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 18:18; 22:17-18).

b. Isaac inherits the promise (read Gen. 26:1-5).

- c. Jacob inherits the promise (read Gen. 28:3-14).
 - d. Israel becomes a nation (read Gen. 46:1-Exod. 34:28).
 - e. Moses instructs Israel concerning the covenant before the land is occupied (read Deut. 28:1-30:20).
 - f. Israel inherits the promised land (read Josh. 21:1-23:16).
2. The *spiritual-seed* part: "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (see Gen. 22:18; compare Gen. 12:3; 18:18; see also Gal. 3:16; 4:4).
- a. *Pre-Abrahamic* period: The revelation of redemption begins with Adam, and begins again with Noah (read Gen. 3:15-21; 6:1-9:7).
 - b. *Abrahamic* period: The promise of redemption is given to Abraham,

Notes:

Notes:

Isaac, Jacob, and Judah (read Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:17-18; 26:3-4; 28:10-14; 49:8-10).

c. *Post-Abrahamic* (Davidic) period: The testimony of redemption is borne by David, his seed, and the prophets (read 2 Sam. 7:11-16; compare Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-9).

d. *Messianic* period: The Good News of redemption is heralded by Gabriel and the heavenly host, and proclaimed by Peter and all the apostles (read Luke 1:26-33; 2:8-14; Acts 2:22-36; compare 1 Peter 1:10-12).

C. Redemption through God's purpose and promise (the spiritual-seed aspect) is the theme of the Bible (read Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 3:1ff; 2 Tim. 3:14ff; 1 Peter 1:10-12; Rom. 1:1-2).

1. The Old Testament teaches redemption through the promised "seed."

a. Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; 15:1ff; 17:1ff;
18:18; 22:17-18; 26:1-5; 28:1-14

b. Deuteronomy 1:11; 6:3; 9:28; 10:9

c. Isaiah 2:1-4; 7:10-14; 9:2-7; 11:1-5

d. Jeremiah 32:36-42; 33:14-16

e. Ezekiel 16:59-63; 34:20-24

f. Daniel 2:44-45; 7:9-22

g. 2 Samuel 7:5ff

h. Psalms 2:1ff; 16:8-11; 77:8; 89:1ff;
105:42

2. The New Testament presents redemption through the promised "Seed."

a. Matthew 1:1-23

b. Mark 12:35-37

c. Luke 1:55

Notes:

Notes:

d. John 8:56-58

e. Acts 1:1-3:26; 13:32ff; 26:1ff

f. Romans 1:1-6; 9:4, 8-9; 15:8

g. 2 Corinthians 1:20

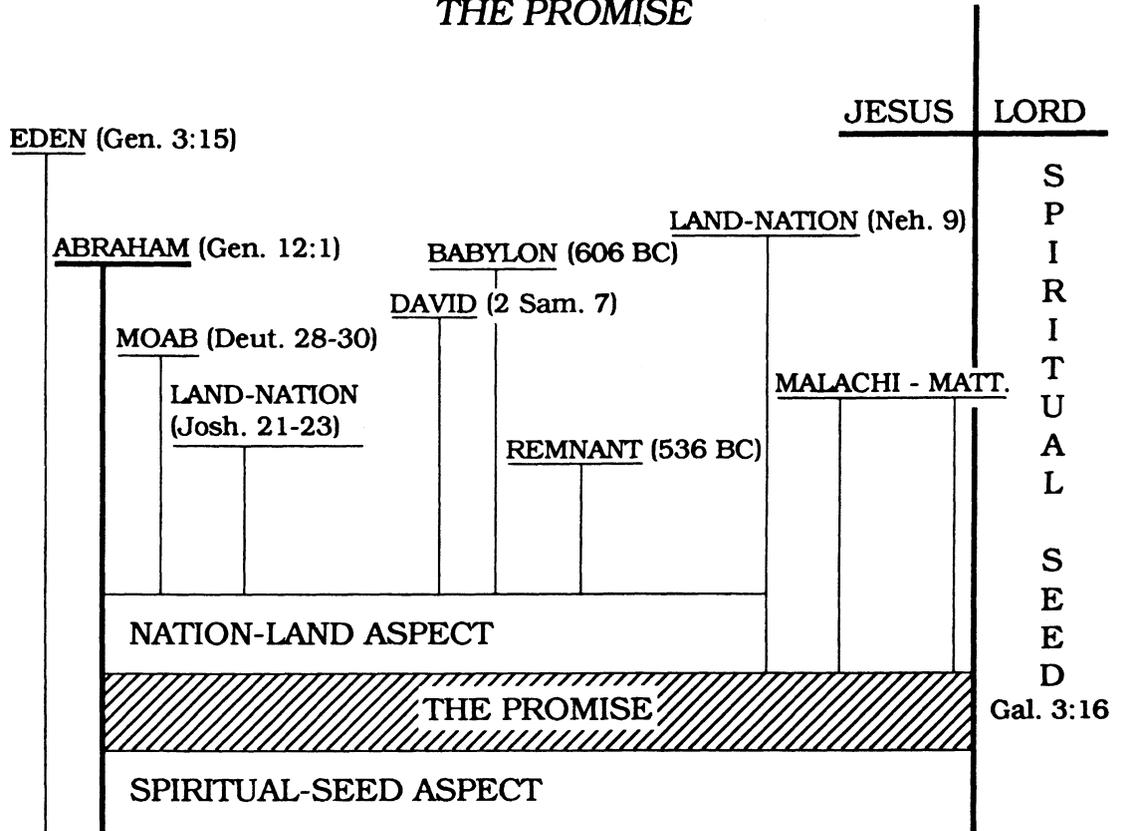
h. Galatians 3:1-4:7

i. Ephesians 1:1-3:21

j. Hebrews 6:12ff

THE PROMISE

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APPENDIX 2

THE SEED PROMISE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Many people do not understand that the Bible is a unit; it is not a conglomeration of unrelated bits and pieces. The following outline substantiates the fact that the revelation of the purpose and promises of God permeates the whole Bible.

- I. The post-resurrection claim of Jesus confirms the indivisible relationship between Himself and the Old Testament (see Luke 24:13-27, 44-49).
 - A. Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of “all that the prophets have spoken” (v. 25).
 - B. Jesus saw references to Himself in “Moses and all the prophets,” as well as “in all the Scriptures”: i.e., the entire Old Testament (v. 27).
 - C. Jesus understood Himself to be the necessary goal toward which all Old

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Testament revelation pointed: "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (v. 44).

1. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms are the three divisions which encompass the entire Hebrew Bible, corresponding to Genesis through Malachi in our Old Testament.

2. Therefore, it is clear that the Old Testament finds its fulfillment and goal in Jesus Christ (see John 5:39; compare Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24; 2 Tim. 3:14ff; Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

II. The post-Pentecost sermon of the apostle Peter declares the indivisible relationship between Jesus Christ and the Old Testament (see Acts 3:11-24).

A. Peter refers to "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (to whom God's promise was made and confirmed) as the One who "has glorified his servant Jesus" (v. 13).

- B. The redemptive work of Jesus had been “foretold through all the prophets” (v. 18).
- C. The things that had been shown beforehand concerning the Christ, “God fulfilled” in the redemptive work of Jesus (v. 18).
- D. All these things God “promised long ago through his holy prophets” (v. 21).
- E. Moses and “all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken,” foretold the days when God would fulfill His promise by sending Christ (vv. 22-25).
- F. Peter shows the connection of those things spoken by the prophets with the covenant God made with Abraham: “Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed” (v. 25).
- G. Finally, the apostle declares that “God raised up his servant,” sending Him first to the Jews, in order to “bless you

Notes:

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by turning each of you from your wicked ways” (v. 26).

III. The proclamation of the apostle Paul before King Agrippa attests to the indivisible relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and the messianic hope revealed in the Old Testament (see Acts 26:1-23).

A. The foundation of Israel’s hope (and all true hope) is “what God has promised our fathers” (vv. 6-8).

B. The whole of revealed messianic truth (i.e., all the Old Testament teaching concerning the Christ who was to come) is summed up in “what God has promised our fathers” (v. 6).

C. Paul concludes his defense by testifying that, in preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he had said “nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen” (vv. 22-23).

D. For further comments by Paul concerning the fulfillment of the promise in

relation to both Jews and Gentiles, read Romans 9:1-11:36, Galatians 3:6-4:7, and Ephesians 2:11-3:12.

The *promise* appears in all parts of the Old Testament. The New Testament witnesses make it abundantly clear that the promise is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Through the Lord Jesus Christ, God offers each of us redemption (the forgiveness of sins and hope of glory) as the fulfillment of the promised blessing that would come through Abraham (Gal. 1:3-4; 3:13-14, 29; Col. 1:13-14, 24).

Notes:



APPENDIX 3

THE SEED PROMISE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. The seed promise is a crucial aspect of Gabriel's pronouncement (read Luke 1:26-33).

A. Isaiah 7:14 (compare Matt. 1:22-23)

B. 2 Samuel 7:11-16

C. Isaiah 9:6-7

II. The seed promise is an essential element in Peter's proclamation (read Acts 2:22-42).

A. *The proposition:* The ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth are matters of divine purpose and historical fact (vv. 22-24).

B. *The proof:* The Holy Spirit bears witness through the inspired Scriptures and the empowered apostles (vv. 25-32; compare 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:16-21).

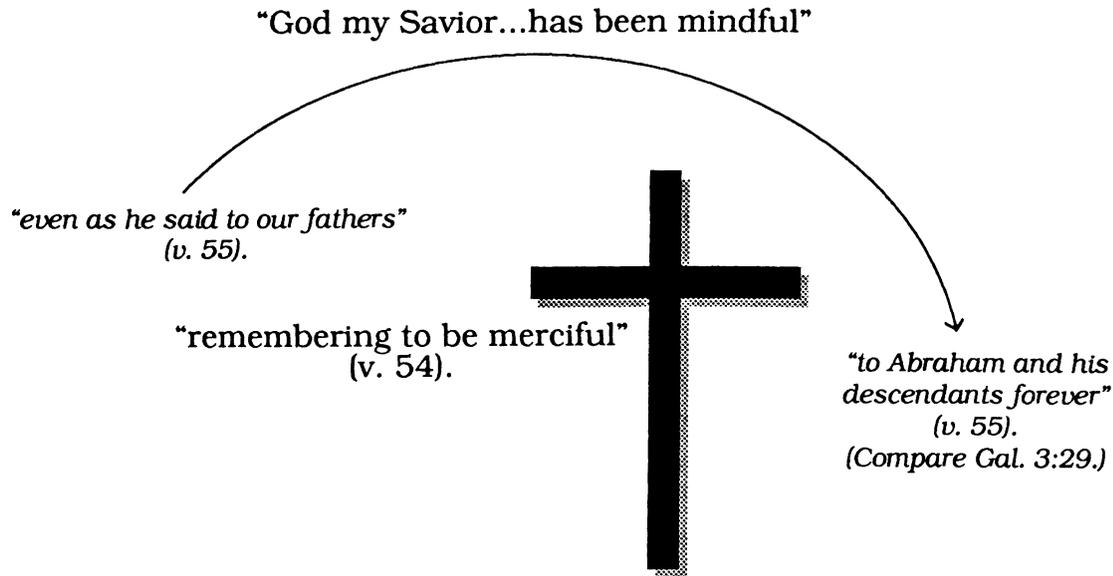
Notes:

Notes:

1. David's prophetic testimony is cited (vv. 25-28; compare Ps. 16:8-11).
 2. Peter's inspired interpretation is applied (vv. 29-32; compare 2 Sam. 7:12).
- C. *The power*: God has fulfilled His promise by raising Jesus from the dead (v. 32).
- D. *The proclamation*: Jesus is the crucified, risen, reigning king who sits on David's eternal throne (vv. 33-36; compare Ps. 110:1).
- III. The seed promise predominates in Mary's canticle of praise to God (read Luke 1:46-55).
- A. A textual analysis of the Magnificat clearly shows
1. Mary's *praise* (vv. 46-47)
 2. God's *providence* (vv. 48-54)
 3. God's *purpose* (vv. 54)

4. God's *promise* (v. 55)

B. Note the following chart.



C. The following comments highlight the theme of redemption in Mary's song.

1. The promise is *remembered* (i.e., the blessing of mercy).
2. The promise is *realized* (within Mary's womb).

Notes:

3. The promise is *fulfilled* (in Jesus, the Messiah).

4. The promise is the *purpose of God's providential activity* throughout history.

IV. The seed promise permeates Zechariah's song of praise (read Luke 1:67-80, especially v. 73).

A. A textual analysis of Zechariah's prophecy indicates

1. His *praise* for what God has done (vv. 67-75)

a. He has visited His people and accomplished *redemption* (vv. 67-68).

b. He has raised up a horn of *salvation* in the house of His servant *David*, as was prophesied (vv. 69-71).

- c. He has remembered His *covenant* and *oath* which He swore to *Abraham* (vv. 72-75).

- 2. His *prophecy* concerning his son, John the Baptizer (vv. 76-77)
 - a. He would be called a prophet (v. 76).

 - b. He would prepare the way for the Lord (v. 76).

 - c. He would proclaim salvation through the forgiveness of sins (v. 77).

- 3. God's *purpose* in visiting His people (vv. 78-79)
 - a. His coming would show mercy (v. 78).

 - b. His presence would shine in darkness (v. 79).

 - c. His ministry would guide His people in the way of peace (v. 79).

Notes:

B. Note the following chart.

Redemption From the House Of David

(2 Sam. 7:11-17; compare Matt. 1:1)

Promise and Prophecy

"Redemption" (v. 68)
"Salvation" (v. 69)

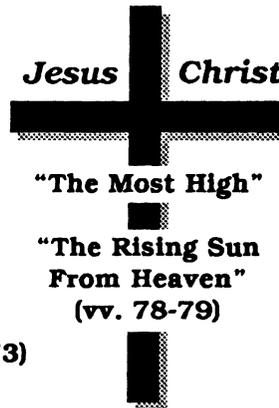
Preparation by John

Prophecy (v. 70)

1 Sam. 2:10
Ps. 18:2
Ps. 89:17
Ps. 132:17

Promise (vv. 72-73)

Gen. 12:1-3
Gen. 18:18
Gen. 22:16-18



"Prophet of the Most High" (v. 76)

– "go on before the Lord" (v. 76)
– "prepare the way for Him" (v. 76)
– "to give...knowledge
of salvation" (v. 77)

C. The following comments highlight the theme of redemption in Zechariah's prophecy.

1. The *prophecy* is theologically rooted in "the oath he [God] swore to our father Abraham."

2. The *promise* of salvation comes, as was prophesied, out of David's lineage.
 3. The *preparation* for the Christ is specifically the ministry of John the Baptizer.
- V. The seed promise prompts the shepherds' praise (read Luke 2:8-21).
- A. A textual analysis of the narrative concerning the shepherds discloses
1. The angel's *revelation* (vv. 9-12)
 2. The angelic *refrain* (vv. 13-14)
 3. The shepherds' *realization* (vv. 15-19)
 4. The shepherds' *rejoicing* (v. 20)

Notes:

B. Note the following chart.

“Good news of great joy...for all the people” (v. 11)

WHEN?	—————→	“Today”
WHERE?	—————→	“In the town of David”
WHAT?	—————→	“[There] has been born to you”
WHOM?	—————→	“A Savior...he is Christ the Lord”

C. The following comments note the theme of redemption in the shepherd narrative.

1. The birth of Jesus, according to the shepherds' testimony, declares the presence of the *Promise*.
2. The promise is concerned with the *Good News of a Savior*.

VI. The seed promise inspires Simeon's prophetic praise (read Luke 2:25-35).

A. A textual analysis of Simeon's praise manifests

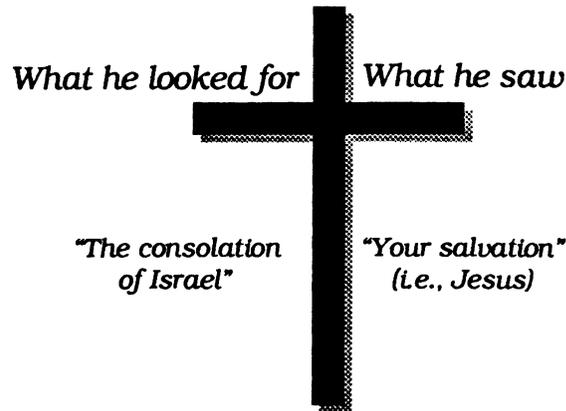
1. Simeon's *disposition* (v. 25)
2. Simeon's *anticipation* (v. 25)

3. Simeon's *inspiration* (vv. 25-28)

4. Simeon's *revelation* (vv. 29-35)

B. Note the following chart.

LOOKING FOR THE LORD'S CHRIST



C. The following comments note the theme of redemption in Simeon's prophecy of praise.

1. This salvation (i.e., the coming of Christ) had been *prepared by God*.

Notes:

2. It was prepared *for all people*: both Israel and the Gentiles (compare Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18).

3. Jesus was *destined* to “cause the falling and rising of many.”

4. Jesus was a *sign* that would be “spoken against.”

VII. The seed promise influences the prophetess Anna to thank God and testify concerning the infant Jesus (read Luke 1:36-38).

A. This godly woman came into the temple “at that very moment” (i.e., as Simeon was holding the infant Jesus) and “spoke about the child [Jesus]” (v. 38).

B. In her thanksgiving to God, Anna testified concerning Jesus “to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (v. 38).

VIII. The seed promise underlies Paul’s sermon at Pisidian Antioch (read Acts 13:16-41).

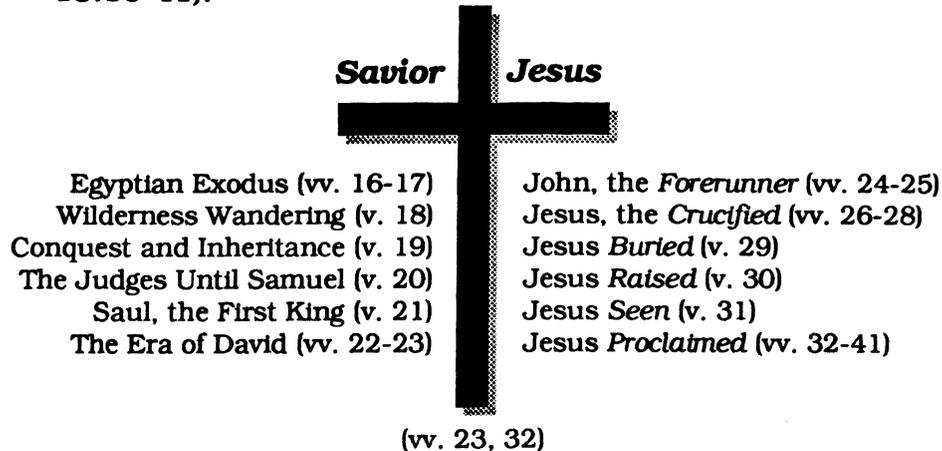
- A. A textual overview of Paul's sermon provides the following analytical breakdown.
1. The history of Israel leads to Jesus (vv. 16-25).
 2. The promise to Israel is fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (vv. 26-37).
 3. Forgiveness of sins and justification are realized only in Jesus (vv. 38-41).
- B. A more detailed analysis of Paul's sermon yields the following outline: *"God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised"* (read Acts 13:16-41).
1. God's *care* is revealed in *providence* (vv. 16-19).
 2. God's *truth* is revealed in *prophecy* (vv. 20-22).
 3. God's *faithfulness* is revealed in *promise* (vv. 23, 32).

Notes:

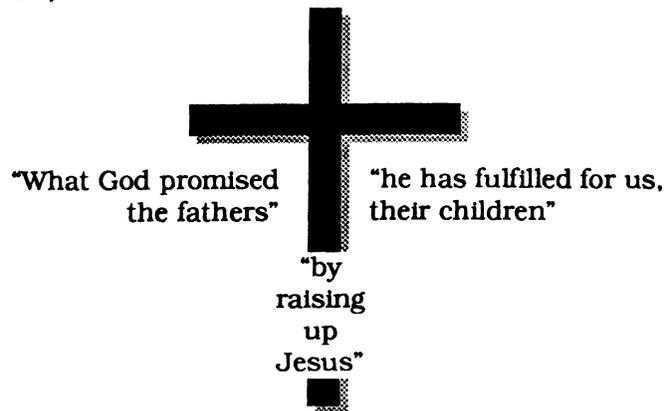
Notes:

4. God's *preparation* is revealed in His *prophet* (vv. 24-25).
 5. God's *predetermined purpose* is revealed in the *gospel proclamation* (vv. 26-29).
 6. God's *strength* is revealed in Christ's *resurrection in power* (vv. 30-37).
 7. God's *love* is revealed in Christ's *propitiation* (vv. 38-39).
 8. God's *justice* is revealed in *prophetic premonition* (vv. 40-41).
- C. Note the following charts.

1. The apostle traces and proclaims the promise (see Acts 13:16-41).



2. "To us this message of salvation has been sent" (see Acts 13:26, 32).



Notes:

D. The following comments note the theme of justification in Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch.

1. The fulfillment of the promise was the basis for Paul's proclamation of the Good News (i.e., the gospel of Christ).

2. The fulfillment of the promise allowed Paul to proclaim the forgiveness of sins and justification by faith in Jesus, the Christ.

IX. The seed promise provides the goal of Stephen's sermon (read Acts 6:8-7:1).

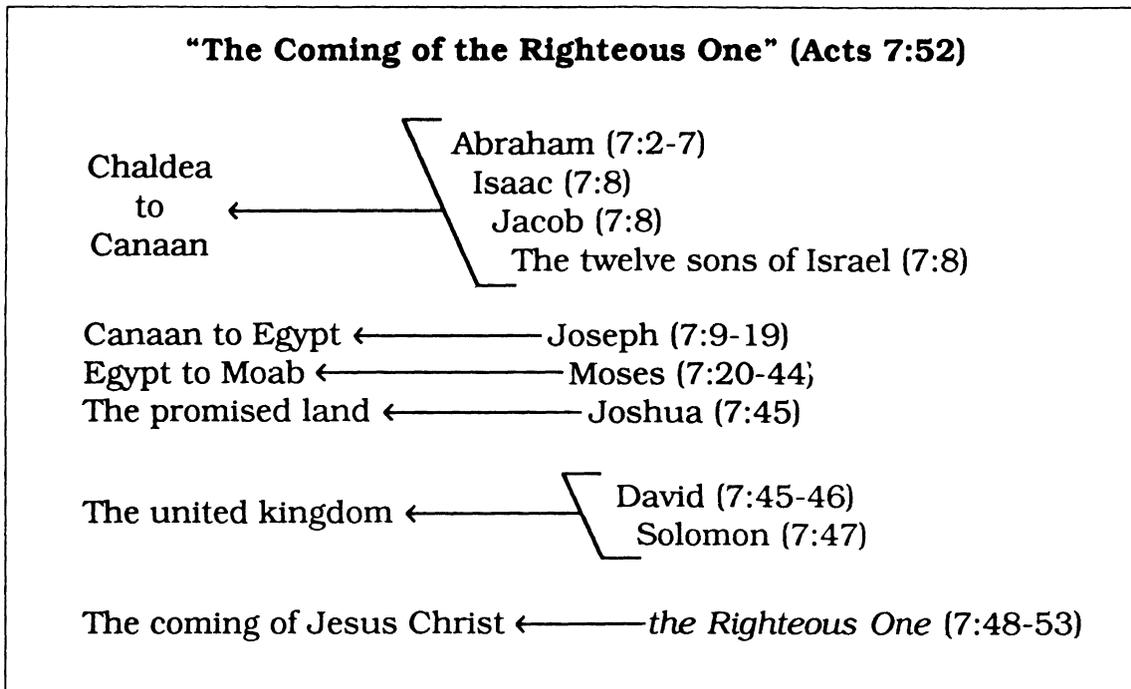
A. A textual analysis of the narrative concerning Stephen furnishes us with

1. The *setting* (see Acts 6:8-7:1)

2. The *sermon* (see Acts 7:2-53)

3. The *slaying* (see Acts 7:54-8:1)

B. Note the following chart.

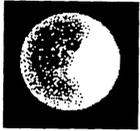


C. The following comments note the theme of redemption in Stephen’s sermon.

1. Stephen referred to God’s promise to Abraham.
2. Stephen mentioned Abraham’s seed (“descendants,” NIV).

Notes:

3. Stephen notes the fulfillment of the nation-land aspect of the promise (see Acts 7:17ff).
4. Stephen's sermon climaxes with the identification of the Righteous One (promised Seed of Abraham), whose coming was foretold by both the Law and the prophets (see Acts 7:52-53).



APPENDIX 4

WITNESSES AND INSPIRED TESTIMONY OF THE PROMISED SEED

Throughout the New Testament, there is an abundance of historical evidence concerning “Jesus, who is called Christ” (Matt. 1:16). This appendix will consider the divinely inspired testimony of witnesses who speak concerning the birth of Jesus, the promised Seed of Abraham and David. I will offer brief textual analyses of biblical passages related to the people and events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ. The declarations of the New Testament witnesses concerning this Jesus, who was miraculously conceived in the womb of a virgin, are in complete agreement with the prophetic revelations of the Old Testament.

- I. The testimony concerning the birth of the promised seed was given to Joseph by an angel of the Lord (see Matt. 1:20-25).
 - A. A textual analysis of the narrative concerning Gabriel’s testimony reveals

Notes:

Notes:

1. The child's *birth* (v. 20)
 2. The child's *name* (v. 21)
 3. The child's *mission* (v. 21)
 4. The child's *origin* (vv. 22-23)
- B. The divinely inspired testimony of the angel includes much information about the promised seed.
1. "What is conceived in her [Mary] is *from the Holy Spirit*" (v. 20).
 2. "She [Mary] will give birth to a son" (v. 21).
 3. "You are to give him the name *Jesus* ['Yahweh is salvation']" (v. 21).
 4. "He will *save his people from their sins*" (v. 21).
 5. "They will call him *Immanuel* ['God with us']" (v. 23).

6. "All this took place *to fulfill what the Lord had said* through the prophet" (v. 22).

II. The revelation to Zechariah concerning the birth of his son was given by the angel Gabriel (see Luke 1:5-20).

A. A textual analysis of the narrative concerning Gabriel's announcement to Zechariah reveals

1. Luke's *descriptive declaration* (vv. 5-12)

2. Gabriel's *divine decree* (vv. 13-17)

3. Zechariah's *doubt and dumbness* (vv. 18-20)

B. The divinely inspired testimony of the angel Gabriel describes the person and work of John the Baptizer in relationship to the promised seed.

1. The role and responsibility of Zechariah and Elizabeth are described.

Notes:

Notes:

- a. "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son" (v. 13).
 - b. "You are to give him the name John" (v. 13).
 - c. "He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth" (v. 14).
 - d. "You [Zechariah] will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens" (v. 20).
2. The person of John the Baptizer is described.
- a. "He will be great in the sight of the Lord" (v. 15).
 - b. "He is never to take wine or other fermented drink" (v. 15).
 - c. "He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth" (v. 15).
3. The work of John the Baptizer is described.

- a. "Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord" (v. 16).
- b. "He will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah" (v. 17).
- c. "[He will] turn the hearts of the fathers to their children" (v. 17).
- d. "[He will turn] the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous" (v. 17).
- e. "[He will] make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (v. 17).

III. The announcement to Mary concerning the conception and birth of her firstborn son, the promised Seed, was made by the angel Gabriel (see Luke 1:26-38).

A. A textual analysis of the narrative concerning Gabriel's announcement to Mary reveals

- 1. That the virgin is highly favored (vv. 26-29)

Notes:

Notes:

2. That the virgin will bear a royal son and savior (vv. 30-33)
 3. That the virgin's conception will be a miraculous work of God (vv. 34-37)
 4. That the virgin is resolved to submit herself to God's purpose and care (v. 38)
- B. The divinely inspired testimony of the angel Gabriel describes the role of Mary and her son, the promised Seed.
1. The role of the virgin, Mary, is described.
 - a. "You...are highly favored! The Lord is with you" (v. 28).
 - b. "You have found favor with God" (v. 30).
 - c. "You will be with child and give birth to a son" (v. 31).
 - d. "You are to give him the name Jesus" (v. 31).

e. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (v. 35).

f. "The power of the Most High will overshadow you" (v. 35).

2. The role of Jesus, the virgin's son, is described.

a. "You are to give him the name Jesus ['Yahweh is salvation']" (v. 31).

b. "He will be great" (v. 32).

c. "[He] will be called the Son of the Most High" (v. 32).

d. "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David" (v. 32).

e. "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever" (v. 33).

f. "His kingdom will never end" (v. 33).

Notes:

Notes:

IV. Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptizer, described the nature of the promised Seed to be borne by Mary (see Luke 1:24-25, 41-44).

A. Elizabeth's exclamation extolling Mary acknowledges her role in bearing the promised Seed.

1. "Blessed are you among women" (v. 43).

2. "But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (v. 43).

3. "Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished" (v. 45).

B. Elizabeth's exclamation extols the promised Seed to be borne by Mary.

1. "Blessed is the child you will bear" (v. 42).

2. "But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (v. 43).

This Jesus, who was born of a virgin, is attested to be the One who was promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament bears witness that the promised Seed is *Jesus* ("salvation"), *Immanuel* ("God with us"), *Son of the Most High*, and *Son of David* (possessing an everlasting kingdom). This testimony is true!

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.... But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me (John 5:39-40, 45-46).

Notes:

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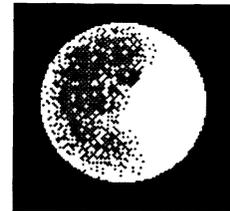
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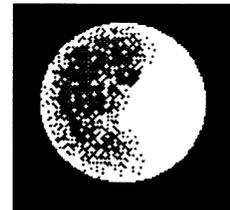
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NAME INDEX

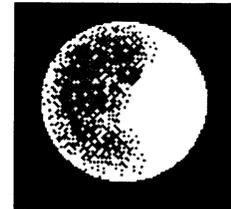
- Aaron, 401, 407
Abel, 93-96, 471
Abraham (Abram), 97, 104-105, 156, 321, 326, 352-62, 369-81, 386-96, 401-402, 404, 430-31, 433-34, 436-37, 457-58, 471-81, 485-95, 500-509, 527-35
Absalom, 105
Adam (and Eve), 19, 23, 48, 53-54, 58, 64, 67-68, 70, 78, 80-82, 118, 141, 156, 203, 208, 258, 367, 471, 473, 485, 495, 529
Ahab, 106
Ahausuerus (Xerxes), 123
Amran, 408
Athaliah, 106, 108, 111
Bathsheba, 506
Bonaparte, Napoleon, 118
Cain, 93-96
Caleb, 458, 460
Christie, Agatha, 129
Cyrus (the Mede), 465
Darwin, Charles, 199-201
David, 105, 107-108, 356, 372, 401, 414, 446, 474, 481, 487, 500, 502, 504-506, 514-16
Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, 129
Dylan, Bob, 257
Einstein, Albert, 527
Enoch, 528
Esau, 406
Esther, 123
Ezra, 465, 467
Freud, Sigmund, 40, 63-64
Gould, Stephen J., 200
Hagar, 405
Haggai, 466
Haman, 121, 123
Herod (the Great), 121, 124
Hezekiah, 106, 108, 112-13, 399, 451-52
Hodge, Charles, 92
Hitchcock, Alfred, 129
Hitler, Adolph, 118, 228
Holmes, Oliver W., 228
Hoyle, Sir Fred, 189
Isaac, 77, 105, 353, 360, 372, 405-406, 434, 458, 481, 485-87, 489-92, 500, 503
Isaiah, 451, 466, 509
Ishmael, 405
Jacob (Israel, the patriarch), 98, 105, 356, 360, 372, 406-407, 434, 458, 481, 485-87, 489-93, 500, 503
James (of Jerusalem), 18
Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), 452
Jehoiakim (Eliakim), 452
Jehoram, 106
Jeremiah, 463, 466
Jeroboam (son of Nebat), 442, 449-50
Jesse, 105
Jesus of Nazareth
 crucifixion of, 10, 126, 131, 141, 243, 245-46, 306, 312-13, 399, 520
 glorification of, 312-13, 371, 516, 520



- identity of, 7, 124,
 131, 214, 269, 299, 305-306, 308, 324-
 31, 336, 351, 354-55, 367-68, 402, 431,
 499, 501, 513, 515, 519-24, 534-35
 incarnation of, 131, 229, 271
 resurrection of, 126, 131, 212-13, 271,
 305-306, 371, 520
 savior of mankind, 12, 29, 42, 69, 73,
 80, 151, 230, 237, 245, 261, 263-
 64, 271-72, 274-77, 287, 312, 324-
 31, 336, 345, 368, 371, 431
 teachings of, 118, 214, 257, 282-83,
 294, 305-306, 337, 513-14
 temptation of, 125
 Jezebel, 106
 Joash, 106, 112
 John (the apostle), 79, 337
 John (the Baptizer), 354
 Joseph (husband of Mary), 124
 Joshua (son of Nun), 327, 401, 418, 433-
 35, 458, 460, 462
 Judah (son of Jacob), 98-99, 481, 493-95
 Kohath, 408
 Lenin, Nikolai (V.I.), 118
 Levi (son of Jacob), 408
 Lewis, C.S., 188, 211
 Maccabees (Judas, Jonathan, Simon), 285
 Manasseh, 107, 452
 Manson, Charles, 228
 Marcion(ism), 369, 501
 Marx, Karl, 90
 Menninger, Karl, 41
 Moses, 156, 244, 282, 372, 407-408, 415,
 424, 448, 458, 462, 466, 521
 Nebuchadnezzar, 443, 452-53
 Nehemiah, 436, 465
 Noah, 97, 457, 474, 479-81, 485, 428-29
 Paul (the apostle), 5, 211, 214, 245, 306,
 336-38, 386-87, 521-23
 Peck, M. Scott, 27
 Peter (the apostle), 5, 515, 519-22
 Pilate, Pontius, 131, 213, 399
 Plato, Platonism, 368
 Rameses (Pharaoh of Egypt), 399
 Rehoboam, 441, 449
 Remus and Romulus, 485
 Russell, Bertrand, 187, 213
 Sade, Marquis de, 228
 Sagan, Carl, 213
 Samson, 414, 487
 Samuel, 105
 Sarah (Sarai), 352, 405, 529
 Satan
 activity of, 31-35, 91, 124-26, 257,
 471-72
 deceiver ("father of lies"), 19, 23, 28,
 173
 reality of, 27-35
 Serpent, 19, 48, 53, 79-81, 83-85, 155,
 173, 283, 321, 473-74
 Saul (King of Israel), 105, 446
 Schaeffer, Francis A., 227
 Sennacherib, 399
 Seth, 481
 Shem, 480
 Skinner, B.F., 40
 Solomon, 372, 401, 435-36, 441-42, 446,
 449, 506-507, 514-15
 Terah, 352
 Washington, George, 485
 Wellhausen, Julius, 201
 Zerubbabel, 465

SUBJECT INDEX

- Angels, 193**
Anti-Semitism, 501
Apocalyptic movement, 444
Apostles, 5, 119, 131, 214, 229, 444
Arianism, 369
Atheism, 17, 40, 107, 187, 189
Baalism, 174
Baptism, 289, 327, 389
Bible (Holy Scripture)
 central theme of, 13, 146, 330,
 472-73
 divine product, 5, 431
 higher critical theories and, 201
 history and, 399-400, 527-28
 human product, 5, 431
 Jesus and, 214
 mankind's need of, 52, 104, 229,
 281, 385-86
 misuse of, 385-86, 472
 teaching of, 78, 118, 146, 191, 201-
 202, 229, 269-70, 281, 305, 320,
 457-58, 499, 527-28
 unity of, 13, 79, 201, 472-73, 499
 value and trustworthiness, 5, 385
**Canaan (Palestine), 353, 358, 360, 378,
401-402, 407, 415, 423, 431, 437**
Capitalism, 17, 335
Christ (the Messiah)
 atonement provided by, 245
 church and, 164-67, 183, 290, 338
 claim of deity, 130
 divinely purposed redeemer, 146-47,
 151, 159, 164-67, 183, 264, 266,
 460, 473, 481
 execution of, 125
 Israel's hope of, 321, 402, 431-32,
 443, 481, 499-500, 502, 513,
 515-16
 lordship of, 513
 proclamation of, 336-38, 402
 salvation offered in, 288, 290
 sanctification provided in, 295, 460,
 473
Church
 body of Christ, 144, 146, 275, 336-
 47, 471-72
 Christ and, 134, 144, 146-52, 159,
 164-67, 183, 275, 290, 336-47
 covenant people of God, 459
 kingdom of God and, 445
Circumcision, 386-89, 532
Covenant(s)
 Abrahamic nation-land, 361, 378-80
 ancient treaty
 forms and biblical,
 415-16, 527
 blessing and
 cursing aspect of
 Mosaic, 413-25



- Christian ("New"), 499
 circumcision, 361, 389-96
 God's sovereignty and, 486
 Mosaic ("Old"), 395, 414-16, 499
 signs of, 389
 testaments and, 499
 Creation, 20, 187-196, 214, 368, 387,
 400, 414, 480, 502, 529
 Death, 57, 70-73, 263, 284, 320, 387
 Demons, 13, 193, 258
 Dispensationalism, 430-31, 467
 Eastern mysticism, 17, 175, 229
 Ecology, 20, 321
 Election, 457-61, 474
 Enlightenment, the, 27, 227
 Essenes, 444
 Evil, 7, 27, 77, 250
 Evolution, 18, 22, 42, 199-201
 Exile, the, 285, 372, 421, 450-51, 460,
 462, 464
 Existentialism, 51
 Exodus, the, 285, 400-402
 Faith (belief, trust), 282, 300, 352,
 387-89, 402, 422-23, 485, 487-88,
 527-30
 Fall, the
 factuality of, 11-12, 18-19, 21, 31,
 218-19
 God and, 51-59
 meaning of, 17-24, 43, 45, 63-73,
 104, 216-19, 222-23, 321, 367
 Family unit, 17, 77
 Flood, the Noachian, 457, 460, 474, 480
 "Fullness of the times," 13, 148-49, 164,
 331, 414, 471, 499, 504, 509
 Glorification, glory, 289, 305-15
 Gnosticism, 174
 God
 author of Scripture, 5
 nature of, 175-76, 178-80, 214, 257,
 259, 270, 285, 399-400, 457, 529
 relationship to man, 19, 32-34, 41,
 46-48, 52, 59, 64-65, 119, 129,
 213, 229, 245, 254, 274-77, 281,
 284-85, 295-96, 299, 312, 320,
 414, 485, 500, 527
 sovereignty of, 7, 9, 14, 79, 103-104,
 457, 459-60, 485
 the Fall and, 51-59, 64-65, 79, 321
 Gospel ("Good News"), 6, 14, 53, 130-31,
 134-38, 173, 214, 230, 276-77, 282-
 83, 287-88, 306, 336, 354, 386, 402,
 458, 471, 499, 501, 516, 520
 Grace, 283-84, 288, 300, 312, 527, 533
 Guilt, 41, 51, 245
 Hatred, 27, 77, 83, 414
 Hermeneutics, 386, 472, 514
 Herodians, 443
 Hinduism, 175
 History
 biblical, 6, 93-99, 104-113, 117-27,
 399-401, 405-409
 biblical view of, 104, 118-20, 149,
 305-306, 474, 499, 528
 church, 368
 direction of goal of, 7, 41, 117-18,
 149, 156-57, 474

- God's active involvement in, 151, 157, 237, 495
 God's purpose and, 13, 93-99, 104-113, 117-27, 146, 149, 157, 237, 405, 474, 495, 499, 528
 human conflict and, 89-92, 399
 kingdom of God and, 444, 474
 naturalism and, 400
 "sacred" and "secular," 399-401
 spiritual conflict within, 93-99, 104-113, 117-27
 Holy Spirit (of God/Christ), 131, 143, 215, 285, 295, 301, 389, 415, 471, 502, 515, 520
 Hope, 527-35
 Human(ity)
 behavior and psychology of, 429, 459
 conflicts within, 89-90
 created in God's image, 17, 78, 194, 203, 207, 213, 229, 282, 296, 310
 definition of, 7, 63-64, 190, 194-96, 202-203
 modern secular, 293, 295-96
 moral nature of, 39-41, 77, 202, 206-208, 211-19, 229, 257-58, 260, 417
 new in Christ, 141-45, 230
 object and subject of divine revelation, 12, 281
 place in God's redemptive purpose, 10, 233-34, 260-66, 269-77, 281-82, 284-90, 298-301, 310-15, 321, 371, 524
 rebellion and fall of, 17, 19, 43, 46-48, 64-66, 260, 269-72, 281, 284, 310, 321
 religious inclination of, 17
 Idolatry, 17, 174, 387, 441-42, 448, 450, 452
 Islam, Moslems, 353, 399
 Judaism, 305-306, 353-54, 400
 Kingdom of God/Christ, 258-59, 271, 282-83, 293, 314, 386, 443-45, 474, 501, 515-16, 530
 Koran (*Quran*), 6
 Law (the)
 general moral, 46, 251, 263, 533
 Mosaic, 72, 251, 405, 408, 416, 418, 443, 485, 487, 532-33
 Old Testament as, 499, 501
 spirit of, 487
 Legalism, 174, 320, 368
 Love, 7, 27, 244, 250, 423, 487
 Maccabees, Maccabean dynasty, 285
 Materialism, 281, 295, 308, 354, 441
 Morals (ethics), 39, 41, 51, 77, 214, 229, 249, 281, 414, 487
 Mystery, 129-38, 141-52, 161-63
 Mythology, 28, 155, 211, 214
 Nature, 20
 New Age movement, 175
 Peace, 502, 508, 515-16
 Pentecost, 293, 306
 Pharisees, 282, 353, 444
 Promise (Abrahamic), 330-37, 352-62, 369-81, 399-409, 466, 473-81, 485-95, 499-509, 517-24, 527-35

- nation-land aspect, 353, 358-59,
 361-62, 369-81, 393, 401-409,
 430-37, 465, 475
 spiritual-seed aspect, 353, 359, 361-
 62, 380, 393, 431, 437, 473-81,
 485-95, 499-509, 517-24, 527-35
 Prophecy, 6, 321, 331, 367, 448, 463,
 465, 479
 Prophets, the, 5, 131, 285, 387, 443-44,
 458, 462, 485, 508
 Propitiation (atonement), 58, 243-54, 414
 Providence (divine), 13, 95, 127, 177, 405
 Purpose
 of God, 7, 10-11, 130, 133-35, 137-
 38, 144-52, 157, 161, 173-83,
 262, 286, 288, 313, 315, 323,
 326, 340-44, 409, 414, 431, 459-
 60, 471, 477, 487, 500, 515
 of life, 7, 313-14
 Racism, 17, 89
 Reconciliation, 13, 244, 269-77, 333,
 368, 502
 Redemption
 central theme of the Bible, 5-14, 86,
 285, 330, 342, 385, 495
 God's eternal purpose of, 133, 148-
 52, 157, 161, 177, 257-66, 321,
 323, 342, 381, 431, 473, 477-78,
 495, 500, 515, 534
 nature of, 295, 297-98, 306, 312,
 339, 342, 381, 467
 promise of, 56, 86, 353, 356, 359-62,
 467, 471, 477-78, 489-94, 500,
 524, 534
- Religion
 biblical, 13, 155, 229, 237, 367
 general human tendency toward, 13,
 51, 228, 270-71, 367
 human conflict and, 90, 430
 Remnant, 423-24, 457-67
 Revelation (Word of God), 5, 7, 27, 52,
 79, 86, 104, 129-30, 146, 155, 161,
 193, 199, 229, 271, 299, 301, 325,
 367, 385-86, 463, 493, 527-28
 Righteous(ness), 228-39, 253, 258, 282-
 83, 320, 354, 387-88, 415, 457-58,
 502, 532-33
 Sacrifice, 57, 132, 243, 253
 Sadducees, 444
 Salvation, 12, 17, 130-31, 173, 183, 230,
 281-90, 297, 336, 386, 457-58, 471,
 473, 524
 Satan
 activity of, 31-35, 91, 124-26, 257,
 471-72
 deceiver ("father of lies"), 19, 23, 28,
 173
 reality of, 27-35
 Serpent (the), 19, 48, 53, 79-81, 83-
 85, 155, 173, 283, 321, 473-74
 Science, 27, 40, 199
 Seed, 18, 56, 80, 83, 85, 95, 106-109,
 111, 124, 321, 326, 354, 360, 395,
 431, 474, 477-81, 488, 491, 504-509,
 516, 522-23
 Sin, 12, 40-48, 72-73, 156, 219-23, 228,
 251-54, 260, 263, 284, 289, 320, 325

Sin and death (law of), 63-73, 214, 284,
431
Socialism, 17
Suicide, 187
Temptation, 34-35
Types, typology, 6, 367, 479
War, 18, 89-90, 514-15
Wrath, 247-52, 254, 263, 282
Zealots, 443
Zionism, 401-402, 430-31

SCRIPTURE INDEX

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

Chap. 1-2 (194, 203)

Chap. 1-3 (194)

Chap. 1-11 (480)

1:1 (179, 191)

1:1ff (193)

1:26 (176)

1:26-27 (203)

1:26-28 (19)

1:27 (46, 219)

1:30 (195)

Chap. 2 (216, 537)

Chap. 2-3 (45, 205, 206)

2:4-25 (205)

2:7 (194, 203)

2:16-17 (34)

2:17 (57, 70, 538)

Chap. 3 (218, 219, 538)

3:1ff (11, 33, 35, 45, 47)

3:1-3 (23)

3:1-5 (33, 78)

3:1-7 (21)

3:1-8 (23)

3:1-24 (22, 54, 477)

3:2-3 (23)

3:3 (23)

3:5 (174)

3:6 (23, 34)

3:6-4:6 (194)

3:8-21 (82, 122)

3:9 (55)

3:15 (31, 56, 80, 81, 82,

86, 124, 321, 326,

473, 478, 538, 541)

3:15-16, 21 (479)

3:15-21 (539)

3:17ff (67)

3:17-19 (20)

3:21 (57, 58)

3:24 (70)

4:1-8 (95)

4:1-15, 25-26 (94)

5:5, 8, 10, 14, 17, 20
(221)

6:1ff (194)

6:1-14 (96)

6:1-9:7 (479, 539)

6:5-7 (379)

6:15 (396)

7:21-23 (96)

8:18-19 (486)

12:1-3 (97, 358, 363,
489, 492, 540)

12:1-3, 7 (360, 541)

12:1-7 (377, 538)

12:1-9 (359)

12:2 (369)

12:2-3 (354)

12:3 (359, **369**, 478,
500, 539, 560)

13:14-17 (362, 538)

15:1ff (97, 362, 380,
409, 492, 541)

15:1-2 (378)

15:1-6 (358)

15:1-16 (110)

15:1-18 (363)

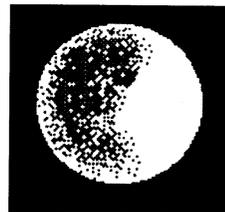
15:1-21 (538)

15:13ff (407)

15:13-14 (105)

15:16 (356, 407, 433)

15:18 (401)



*Note: Scriptures in bold
are quoted in the text

15:18-21 (430, 435)
 17:1 (179)
 17:1ff (541)
 17:1-14 (390, 538)
 17:2, 4, 7, 8, 19 (363)
 17:4-14 (393)
 17:6-7, 15-16 (362)
 17:6, 17 (362)
 17:7 (394)
17:8 (369)
 17:9, 12 (396)
 17:13 (395)
 17:15-19 (97)
 17:15-22 (358)
 17:19 (97)

18:16-33 (379)
18:18 (362, 363, 367,
 478, **489**, 500, 538,
 539, 540, 541, 560)
 18:18-19 (422)
 18:25 (180, 457)

21:1-3 (97)
 21:1-4 (358, 362)

22:15-18 (360, 422)
22:17-18 (326, 363,
489, 538, 540, 541)
22:18 (359, 361, 362,
369, 478, 500, 523,
539, 560)

26:1-5 (405, 538, 541)
 26:3-4 (363, 540)
26:3-5 (489)

28:1-4 (362)
 28:1-14 (541)
 28:3 (362)
 28:3-4, 13-14 (406)
 28:3-14 (539)
28:10-14 (491, 540)
 28:13ff (362)
 28:13-14 (363)
 29:31-30:24 (406)
 32:28 (406)

35:11 (179, 362)
 35:11-12 (362)
 35:16-26 (406)

37:1-36 (98)
 39:1-50:26 (98)
 41:55-47:1 (98)
 42:1-2 (98)
 43:8 (98)

46:1-7 (406)
 46:1-Exod. 34:28 (539)
 46:3 (362)

48:1-4 (362)
 49:1-28 (406)
 49:8-10 (493, 540)

50:15-21 (99)
 50:22-26 (110)

Exodus

1:1-7 (20, 407)
1:8-22 (109, 110)
 3:4-10 (110)
 3:1-6:9 (407)
 3:14 (179)
 6:6 (259)
 15:13 (259)
 19:1-6 (404, 408)
 19:4-6 (394)
 20:1-17 (408)
 23:31 (380)
 32:20 (179)
 34:27-28 (480)

Leviticus

16:2, 14, 30 (245)
 18:5 (72)
 18:24-28 (379)
 20:22-24 (379)
 26:40-42 (486)

Numbers

24:17 (494)

Deuteronomy

1:11 (541)
 4:1, 5-8 (408)
4:3 (105)

5:1-5, 15 (408)

5:16 (413)

6:3 (541)

6:4-5 (487)

6:4-6 (501)

6:5-7 (414)

7:7-8 (259)

8:17-20 (423)

9:5 (486)

9:28 (541)

10:9 (541)

11:29 (415)

15:15 (259)

16:12 (259)

18:9-17 (379)

26:5-11 (486)

26:16-27:16 (418)

27:12-13 (415)

Chap. 28-30 (402, 418,
430, 448, 450, 539)

28:1-20, 64-68 (421)

28:1-68 (421)

28:15, 63-64 (451)

29:1, 9 (422)

29:12-13 (407)

Chap. 30 (448, 453)

30:1-3 (424)

30:1-4 (464)

30:1-10 (423)

30:6 (387)

30:11ff (487)

30:11-16 (416)

30:11-20 (423)

30:19-20 (417)

33:4 (408)

Joshua

Book of Joshua (418)

8:33-35 (415)

21:14-16 (433, 435)

21:1-23:16 (539)

21:14-16 (423, 435)

21:43 (434)

21:43, 45 (402)

**21:43-45 (430, 433,
434)**

1 Samuel

16:1-13 (110)

17:1-51 (111)

18:8-11 (111)

19:1, 8-12 (111)

2 Samuel

7:1-17 (505)

7:1-29 (442)

7:5ff (541)

7:11 (505)

7:11ff (358)

7:11-13 (506)

7:11-16 (504, 540, 551)

7:11-17 (507)

7:12 (504, 506, 552)

7:12-13 (506)

7:12-17 (505)

7:13 (506)

7:14 (506)

7:14-16 (506)

7:16 (507)

7:18-19, 21 (106)

7:27-28 (505)

12:24-25 (506)

15:1-18:33 (111)

1 Kings

2:12 (506)

4:21 (430, 435)

6:1ff (506)

12:16 (442)

12:25-33 (450)

12:26-33 (442)

12:29-39 (442)

13:33-34 (450)

14:16 (450)

15:30, 34 (450)

16:2, 19, 31 (450)

22:52 (450)

2 Kings

3:3 (450)

10:29, 31 (450)

11:1ff (111)

Chap. 11-12 (449)
11:2 (112)
 13:2, 6, 11 (450)
 14:24 (450)
 15: 9, 18, 24, 28 (450)
 17:1-6, 18 (451)
 17:7-23 (450)
 17:18 (451)
 17:21-23 (450)
 Chap. 18-20 (112, 451)
 20:1-3 (112)
 20:6 (113)

21:1 (113)
 21:1-18 (452)
 22:1-23:30 (422)
 23:15 (450)
 24:1-7 (452)
 24:8-20 (452)
 24:17-25:12 (453)

1 Chronicles

2:1 (406)
28:2-3 (514)

2 Chronicles

7:17-22 (486)
7:19-20 (402)
 11:13-17 (442)
 22:10-12 (112)
 23:8-11 (112)
 24:1 (112)
 33:10-20 (452)

36:15-21 (450)
 36:17-21 (453)

Ezra

1:1-3, 11 (465)
 5:1-2 (466)
 6:16-18 (467)
 7:1-9 (465)
 9:5-15 (465)

Nehemiah

1:3, 8-10 (465)
 9:7-8 (436)

Esther

3:1-6 (123)
 3:1-7:10 (123)
3:13 (123)
 4:14 (124)
 5:3 (124)
 6:1-3 (124)

Psalms

2:1ff (541)
 2:7 (522)
 7:11 (249)
 Ps. 8 (193, 194, 207)
 16:8-10 (107)
 16:8-11 (520, 541, 552)
 16:10 (522)
 19:1 (193)
 25:6 (180)
 77:8 (541)

78:1ff (11)
 Ps. 89 (442, 541)
 89:14 (379)
 105:42 (541)
 110:1 (520, 552)
 118:22-23 (459)
 139:1-6 (179)
 139:7-12 (180)
 145:17 (180)
 147:19-20 (408)

Proverbs

1:7 (414)
 14:34 (379, 449)
 16:18 (379)

Ecclesiastes

3:18-22 (194, 196)
 12:7 (14, 194, 196)

Isaiah

1:9 (424)
 2:1-4 (502, 515, 541)
 7:10-14 (541)
 7:14 (124, 509, 540, 551)
 9:2-7 (541)
9:6-7 (502, 508, 540, 551)
 10:20-22 (424)
 10:22-23, 459)
 11:1ff (509)
 11:1-5 (541)
 11:1-9 (502, 540)

36:1-39:8 (451)
 40:3 (445)
 40:13 (103)
 40:28 (179)
43:15-16 (186)
 45:12 (179)
 45:18-19 (193)
53:5 (502, 508)
 53:6-12 (180)
 55:3 (522)
 57:15 (179)
 59:1-2 (59, 71, 222)
 61:10 (58)

Jeremiah

1:5-6 (181)
4:4 (387)
 19:1-11 (424)
 20:9 (181)
 21:1-10 (453)
 22:18-19 (452)
 22:24-30 (452)
 23:5-6 (509)
 23:23-24 (180)
 25:1-14 (453)
25:8-12 (463)
 27:21-22 (453)
 29:10-14 (463)
 31:15 (124)
 32:1-33:26 (453)
 32:36-42 (541)
 33:14-16 (541)
 33:15-26 (508)

34:1-5 (453)
 34:18 (363)
 34:18-19 (380)
 39:1-10 (453)

Ezekiel

1:1-3 (452)
 16:59-63 (541)
 18:20 (70, 195)
 34:20-24 (541)
 37:1ff (453)

Daniel

1:1 (452)
 2:21 (14)
 2:44-45 (541)
 7:9-22 (541)
 9:1-2 (463)

Hosea

6:6 (487)

Joel

3:9-13 (379)

Amos

9:7-8 (449)

Micah

5:2-5 (508)
 5:5 (494)
 6:6-8 (487)
7:18-20 (488)

Nahum

Chap. 1-3 (452)

Habakkuk

Chap. 1-3 (452)
 1:12-13 (180)

Haggai

1:2-3, 12-14 (466)

Zechariah

6:12-14 (509)

Malachi

3:6 (180)

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew

Gospel of Matthew (135)
 1:1 (505)
 1:1ff (56, 358)
 1:1-16 (481)
 1:1-17 (381)
 1:1-23 (541)
 1:1, 6, 17 (111)
 1:2 (98)
 1:6 (506)
 1:10 (113)
 1:16 (567)
 1:18-20 (509)
 1:20-25 (567)

1:21 (286, 289, 327)

1:22-23 (551)

2:1ff (124)

2:1-2 (494)

2:4-6 (494)

3:7-10 (355)

3:19 (32)

4:1-11 (34 (125))

4:10 (31)

5:1-20 (486)

5:17 (501)

5:17ff (46, 219)

5:20 (231)

5:20, 48 (234)

5:48 (46, 219)

7:21-23 (301)

10:28 (195, 325)

11:28-30 (330)

12:26 (31)

13:19 (173)

13:24-29, 36-43 (34)

16:16 (507)

16:16-18 (342)

16:18-19 (515)

16:25-26 (195)

18:10 (193)

18:11 (289)

19:1-2 (22)

19:2 (406)

19:4 (45, 203, 218)

20:16 (306)

20:28 (261)

21:33-46 (500)

21:42-44 (459)

22:34-40 (219, 487, 501)

22:37 (208)

22:37-40 (45)

23:29-36 (379)

24:25 (460)

24:37-39 (97)

25:14-30 (308)

25:41 (193)

25:46 (325)

26:59-61 (126)

28:18 (84, 328)

28:18-20 (135, 330)

Mark

Gospel of Mark (135)

1:15 (149, 164)

4:15 (32)

4:41 (328)

9:1-8 (314)

10:35 (272)

10:45 (261, 266)

12:35-37 (541)

Luke

Gospel of Luke (135)

1:1-4 (135)

1:5-20 (569)

1:24-25, 41-44 (574)

1:26-33 (506, 540, 551)

1:26-33, 68-75 (509)

1:26-38 (571)

1:36-38 (560)

1:46-55 (552)

1:55 (541)

1:67-80 (554)

2:8-14 (540)

2:8-21 (557)

3:23-38 (203, 481)

3:31 (111)

3:33-34 (98)

3:38 (22, 96, 218)

8:12 (32)

9:23 (45, **215**, 219, 329)

13:16-41 (560, 561)

14:25-33 (45, 219)

15:22ff (58)

15:32 (58)

16:9-11 (370)

17:26-27 (97)

18:1-8 (460)

18:9ff (283)

19:10 (286, 289, 326)

19:12-13 (118)**20:9 (119)**

22:25 (305)
22:31 (31, 33)
22:53 (125)

23:47 (57)
24:13-27, 44-49 (545)
24:25-27 (472)
24:25-27, 44-47 (85,
514, 523, 540)
24:39 (179)
24:44 (546)
24:44-47 (472)
24:44-48 (235)

John

Gospel of John (135)

1:1-3 (93)
1:1-18 (12)
1:11-13 (403)
1:29 (327, 479)
1:45-46 (322)

3:1-8 (403)
3:14-16, 36 (287)
3:16 (71, 182, 326)
3:16-21 (158)
3:20-21 (230)
3:36 (249, 263)

4:23-24 (486)
4:24 (179)

5:39, (546)

5:39-40 (36-37, 514)
5:39-40, 45-46, (575)

6:28-29 (289)
6:44 (182)
6:63 (328)

7:22 (395)
7:37-39 (330)
7:46 (328)

8:21 (222)
8:21-24 (325)
8:21, 24 (73)
8:31-32, 39-40 (356)

8:31-36 (259)
8:34 (222)
8:34-35 (222)
8:34-36 (73)
8:34, 36 (263)
8:36 (264)
8:44 (31, 33, 35, 95)

8:46 (328)
8:56 (370)
8:56-58 (542)

10:10 (330)
10:17-18 (329)
10:18 (181)

11:24-25 (328)
11:25 (71)
11:53 (125)

12:23-28 (308)
12:27-33 (312)
12:31-32 (474)
12:48-50 (328)

13:2, 18, 27 (125)
13:31 (313)
13:34-35 (339)

14:6 (12, 71, 180, 277,
288, 330)
14:27 (502, 508)
16:33 (127)

17:1, 4-5 (313)
17:3 (71)
17:3, 5, 24 (71)
17:4 (313)
17:17 (297, 301)
17:17, 19 (300)
17:24 (314)

20:30-31 (136, 328)
21:24 (136)

Acts

Acts 1:1-3:26 (542)
1:9-11 (329)

Chap. 2 (515, 520)
2:14-21 (520)
2:22-24 (520)
2:22-36 (518, 540)

2:22-42 (551)
 2:23 (126, 181)
 2:24-27 (107)
 2:25-32 (520)
 2:30-31 (507)
 2:33 (520)
 2:38 (164, 189, 330)
 2:38-39 (524)
 2:40 (288)
 2:41, 47 (345)

Chap. 3 (520, 540)
 3:11-24 (546)
 3:13 (520)
 3:14-15 (126, 521)
3:17-26 (519)
 3:18 (84)
 3:18, 20 (521)
3:19-21 (516)
 3:22-23 (521)
3:22-23, 25-26 (459)

4:2 (288)
 4:10 (328)
 4:12 (12, 151, 330, 535)
 4:28 (181)

5:12 (328)
 5:32 (164)
 6:8-7:1 (564)
7:1-50 (377)
 7:1-60 (11)
 Chap. 10 (515)

10:1-11:18 (524)

13:23 (522)
 13:23-29 (126)
 13:23-39 (521)
 13:26 (287)
 13:32ff (542)
 13:32-34 (522)
 13:35 (522)
 13:38-39 (522)
13:39 (367)

15:1ff (395)
 15:1-31 (524)
 15:18 (179)

16:14 (187)
 16:17 (288)

17:23-24 (180)
17:26, 28 (91)
17:29-31 (190)
 17:31 (237)

20:28 (264, 345)
 20:32 (300)

26:1ff (542)
 26:1-23 (548)
 26:6-23 (521)
 26:17-18 (299)
 26:19 (181)
 28:23-31 (521)

Romans

1:1-2 (6, 472, 540)
 1:1-3 (111)
 1:1-4 (12, 358, 505)
 1:1-5 (235)
 1:1-6 (542)
 1:2 (126)
 1:2-4 (507)
1:3 (106, 126)
 1:4 (126, 329)
 1:16 (287)
1:16-17 (73, 136, 230, 231, 234, 288, 328)
 1:18 (237, 249, 263)
 1:18ff (250)
1:18-32 (217)
 1:20 (187, 190)
 1:20-21 (46, 219)
1:21-23 (28, 52)
 1:30 (166)

2:1-11 (263)
 2:1-16 (237)
 2:4 (221)
 2:5 (180, 249)
 2:5-11 (251)
 2:5-16 (237)
2:25, 28-29 (387)
 2:26ff (396)
 2:28-29 (395)

3:1-2, 19-20 (408)
 3:4 (180)

- 3:5 (249)
 3:9ff (238)
 3:9, 19 (251)
 3:9-11 (56)
 3:9-31 (232)
 3:9-4:16 (524)
3:10-11 (11, 258)
 3:10, 23 (45, 219)
 3:19 (263)
 3:19-21 (72)
 3:21 (235)
 3:21-26 (57, 236, 251)
 3:21-4:25 (233)
 3:23 (11, 24, 222, 310)
 3:24 (261, 265)
3:25 (57, 181, 239, 247, 251)
 3:26 (238)
- 4:1-9 (532)
4:1-25 (392, 395, 531, 532)
 4:3-4 (235)
 4:4-5 (389)
 4:9-12 (388)
 4:10-11 (532)
 4:12 (533)
 4:12, 17-25 (388)
 4:13-15 (533)
 4:15-16 (231)
 4:16-17 (393)
 4:16-22 (533)
4:17 (529)
- 4:17-25 (530)
 4:18-21 (97)
 4:21 (110)
 4:23-25 (533)
 4:24-25 (236)
4:25 (243)
- 5:1 (502)
5:1-2 (119)
 5:1-11 (252, 508)
 5:2 (314)
 5:6 (149, 164, 243)
 5:6-8 (56, 180, 326)
5:8 (243)
 5:8-9 (253)
5:8-11 (273, 274)
 5:9 (249, 263, 290)
5:12 (68, 202, 218, 221, 538)
 5:12ff (45, 67, 202, 208, 219)
5:12-21 (11, 22, 44)
 5:13 (24)
 5:15-17 (235)
 5:20-21 (72)
 5:21 (222, 236)
- Chap. 6 (236, 264)
 6:1-4 (300)
 6:1-11, 17 (326)
 6:1-11, 17-19 (299)
 6:3 (327)
 6:6, 17 (222)
- 6:9 (371)**
 6:9-10 (329)
6:13 (294)
6:13-23 (262)
 6:14 (222, 263)
 6:14-17 (263)
 6:17 (327)
 6:19 (220, 300)
 6:19-22 (299)
 6:23 (221, 236, 263)
- 7:7ff (194)
7:7-9 (258)
7:7-9, 11 (56)
 7:7-11 (24, 45, 71, 219)
 7:7-14 (221)
7:7-25 (69)
 7:10, 14, 22-24 (72)
 7:13 (221)
 7:14 (263)
 7:17, 20, 23 (222)
7:24-25 (260)
 7:24-8:3 (264)
 7:24-8:4 (73)
- 8:1 (252)
 8:1-2 (236)
 8:1-3 (68, 71, 73, 289, 329, 538)
 8:1-4 (84)
8:1-11 (236, 298)
 8:1-17 (300)
 8:1, 38-39 (27)

- 8:2-4 (66)
 8:3-4, 32 (250)
 8:9-11 (534)
 8:9-21 (265)
 8:12-30 (311, 313)
 8:17 (309)
 8:17-18 (312, 313)
 8:18 (304)
 8:18-21 (314)
 8:18-23 (25, 218, 314)
 8:18-30 (178)
8:20-21 (20)
 8:21-23 (339)
 8:22-25 (535)
 8:23 (194, 196, 265, 266)
 8:24 (119)
 8:28 (181)
 8:28-30 (151, 165, 313, 315, 537)
8:28-39 (160, 460)
 8:29-30 (11)
 8:32 (239)
- 9:1-11:36 (549)
9:4-5 (432)
 9:4, 8-9, (542)
9:6-9 (403, 406)
 9:7 (97)
 9:10-13 (406)
 9:11 (181)
 9:23-24 (313)
9:27 (459)
 9:30-10:7 (235)
- 10:1-4 (231)
 10:1-4, 10-16, 236)
10:4 (367, 546)
 11:1-24 (524)
 11:6 (235)
 11:13-24 (500)
 11:22 (**248**, 459)
 11:25-29 (524)
- 12:1-2 (194)
 12:4-8 (164)
 13:11 (289, 290)
 14:1-12 (182)
- 15:4 (13)
 15:8 (542)
 15:8-12 (524)
 15:16 (300)
- 16:25-26 (130, 537)
 16:25-27 (6, 136, 472)
- 1 Corinthians**
 1:1-3 (299)
 1:18 (288, 290)
 1:18-2:2 (162)
 1:20-25 (161)
1:26-27 (144)
1:26-29 (338)
 1:30 (162, 233, 234, 239, 265, 299, 300, 479)
- 2:2 (327)
2:6 (103)
2:6-8 (283)
 2:6-10 (161)
 2:7 (151, 537)
 2:8 (125)
 2:11 (195)
- 3:10-11 (342)
 3:16-18 (515)
- 6:9-11 (300)
 6:11 (300, 301)
 6:12-20 (194)
 6:19-20 (264)
 7:18-19 (396)
 8:5-6 (191)
 10:5-11 (249)
 12:1ff (164)
 12:13 (339, 345)
- 15:1ff (194)
 15:1-4 (73, 136, 223, 234, 290, 326, 327, 549)
 15:3 (243)
 15:20-22 (45)
 15:20-23, 45-49 (203)
 15:21-22 (22, 218)
 15:22 (208, 221)
 15:32 (65)
 15:45 (195)
15:47-49 (305)

15:54 (371)
 15:55ff (329)
 15:55-58 (264, 325)
 15:56 (24, 84, 223)
 15:56-58 (535)

2 Corinthians

1:20 (542)
 1:20-22 (265)
 2:11 (31, 34, 35)
 3:13-16 (396)
3:14-16 (368)
4:3-4 (28, 173)
 4:17 (313)

5:1-10 (196)
 5:5 (265)
 5:10-11 (194)
5:11-6:2 (274)
 5:14-21 (223)
 5:16-17 (396)
 5:18-21 (14, 252, 273, 276)
5:19 (268)
 5:19-21 (264)
 5:19-6:2 (331)
 5:20-21 (250, 265)
 5:20-6:2 (277)
5:21 (53, 58, 243, 252)

6:2 (278, 288, 290)
 6:16 (515)
6:17-18 (92)

7:1 (195)
 11:3 (22, 218)
 11:3, 14-15 (31)
 12:2-4 (196)
 12:12 (328)
13:4 (307)

Galatians

1:3-4 (549)
 1:4 (264, 289, 325, 328)
 1:15 (181)

2:16-21 (72)
2:20 (45, 219, 231, 243, 252, 296, 326)
 2:20-21 (236, 239)

3:1 (522)
 3:1ff (522, 524)
 3:1-3 (301)
 3:1-4:7 (542)
3:6-7, 16 (356)
 3:6-9, 13-14, 26-29 (523)
 3:6-18 (532)
 3:6-4:7 (549)
3:8 (370, 501)
 3:8-9 (478)
 3:8-16 (326)
 3:8, 16 (362)
 3:10-14 (263)
 3:12ff (72)
3:13 (243, 250)
 3:13-14 (56)

3:13-14, 26-29 (523)
 3:13-14, 29 (549)
 3:15-19 (523, 533)
 3:16 (110, 124, 358, 539)
 3:16-29 (113)
 3:16, 29 (403, 478)
 3:22 (222)
 3:24 (546)
 3:26-29 (339, 533)
3:29 (530)

4:4 (13, 56, 124, 326, 539)
4:4-5 (80, 149, 263, 474, 479, 509)
 4:4-6 (85, 164)
 4:4-7 (534)
 4:5 (265)
 4:21-31 (405)

5:1-12 (395)
 5:16-25 (300)
 5:22-25 (301)

6:14-16 (389)
 6:15 (396)

Ephesians
 Epistle to the Ephesians
 (12, 323)
 Chap. 1-3 (13, 542)
 1:1ff (324)
 1:1-3, 21 (11)

- 1:1-7, 23 (340)
 1:3-5 (323)
 1:3-7 (323)
 1:3-11 (478)
1:3-14 (10, 147, 162, 325, 537)
 1:4, 5, 11 (181)
 1:4, 10 (323)
 1:4, 11 (342)
 1:5, 11 (181)
 1:7 (265, 329)
 1:7-12 (323)
 1:9 (163)
 1:9, 11 (181)
 1:10 (13, 164)
 1:13 (164, 287)
 1:13-14 (265, 326, 339, 534)
 1:15-21 (301)
 1:15-23 (329)
 1:18 (313)
 1:18-2:7 (126)
 1:21 (93)
 1:22 (84)
 1:22-23 (152, 323)
 1:23 (342)

 2:1-3 (58, 71)
 2:1-4 (221)
2:1-5 (30)
 2:1-10 (235, 288)
 2:4-5 (326)
 2:5 (342)

2:8-9 (286)
 2:11-22 (524)
 2:11-3:12 (549)
 2:14 (494)
 2:14ff (508)
 2:14-16 (342)
 2:14-18 (275)
 2:14-22 (323)
 2:16 (273)
2:19 (334)
 2:19-20 (406)
 2:19-22 (515)
 2:21 (343)
 2:22 (343)

3:1-11 (149, 162, 323, 340, 537)
 3:1-11 (20-21, 342)
 3:1-13 (134, 341)
 3:2-5 (6)
 3:4-6 (163)
3:6 (338)
 3:8-11, 20-21 (341)
 3:11 (167, 181)
3:11-12 (154)
 3:14-21 (329)
 3:14-4:1, 17-24 (301)
 3:20-21 (179, 343)

 4:3-5 (343)
 4:7-16 (164)
 4:8-9 (329)
 4:17-19 (220)

 4:17-20 (71)
 4:18 (58)
 4:30 (265, 339)

 5:1-6 (249)
 5:2 (243)
 5:5 (507)
 5:11 (71)
 5:22ff (290)
 5:22, 24 (343)
 5:23 (152, 340, 343, 345)
 5:23-24, 32 (343)
 5:25 (345)
 5:25-26 (299)
 5:25, 29 (344)
 5:26-27 (344)
5:27 (337)

 6:2-3 (413)
 6:10-12 (323)
 6:10-18 (343)
 6:11 (31)
 6:12 (91)
 6:16 (34)
 6:21 (193)

Philippians
 1:9-11 (301)

 2:5 (299)
2:5-11 (307, 312)
 2:6-11 (120)
 2:9-11 (313)

3:3 (389, 295)

3:3-21 (236)

3:6-9 (231)

3:8 (354)

3:10-11 (327)

3:21 (314)

4:4-9 (236)

4:6-7 (502)

Colossians

1:3-8 (535)

1:3-29 (13)

1:9-14 (301)

1:9-23 (192)

1:9-2:14 (323)

1:13-14 (507)

1:13-14, 24 (549)

1:14 (14, 265)

1:16 (14, 192)

1:18 (84)

1:18-27 (327)

1:19-20 (164, 368)

1:19-23 (275)

1:19-27 (163)

1:20 (508)

1:20-22 (277)

1:20-23 (273)

1:21-23 (301)

1:22 (299)

1:22-23 (300)

1:23 (290)

1:24-25 (534)

1:27 (310, 314)

2:6-7ff (301)

2:8 (175)

2:8-15 (327)

2:11-12 (395)

2:13 (221)

2:13-15 (30, 85)

2:14ff (329)

3:1-4 (326)

3:1-5ff (299)

3:4 (313, 314)

3:5-10 (515)

3:6 (249)

3:9ff (236)

3:11 (339)

1 Thessalonians

1:10 (249, 251, 263)

2:12 (314)

2:16 (249)

3:13 (299)

4:1-3 (301)

4:3-4, 7 (299)

4:13-18 (345)

5:1-11 (535)

5:9 (251)

5:23 (34, 194, 195, 196,
298)

2 Thessalonians

1:5-10 (251)

1:5-12 (263)

1:7-10 (345)

1:10, 12 (312)

2:4 (46, 219)

2:9-12 (34)

2:10-12 (220)

2:13 (289, 298, 300)

2:13-14 (136, 181, 314)

2:14 (234)

1 Timothy

1:1 (534, 535)

1:15 (286, 328)

1:17 (179)

1:20 (31)

2:4-5 (277, 287)

2:5 (329)

2:11-15 (22)

2:13 (203)

2:13-14 (45, 218)

2:14 (34, 56)

2:15 (56, 299)

3:15 (507)

3:16 (313)

4:1 (31)

4:2 (222)

4:8 (293)

5:6 (58, 221)

6:16 (179)

2 Timothy

1:8 (358)
 1:8-10 (134)
 1:9 (181, 287, 288, 289,
 537)

1:9-10 (132)

1:10 (71, 85)
 1:12 (460)

2:8 (111, 507)
 2:10 (288, 313)
2:19 (461)
 2:24-26 (31, 34)

3:4 (166)
 3:14ff (540, 546)
 3:14-17 (6)
3:15-17 (386, 473)

4:6-8, 18 (460)

Titus

1:1-2 (176)
 1:1-3 (524)
 1:1-4 (534)
 2:11 (182)
 2:11-14 (327)
 2:14 (220, 266)
 3:3-7 (30, 327)
 3:3-8 (288)
3:4-7 (135, 235, 286)
 3:5 (180)

Hebrews

1:1-2 (546)
 1:1-3 (191)
 1:1-8 (329)
 1:14 (193)

 2:3 (290)
 2:3-4 (136, 328)
 2:5-18 (194)
 2:6-8 (207)
2:8-9 (119)
 2:9 (243)
 2:9ff (250)
 2:10 (288)
 2:11 (299)
**2:14-15 (28, 33, 65, 80,
 84, 233)**
2:14-16 (85, 474)
2:17 (248, 252)
 2:17-18 (125)

3:6 (507)
 3:7-4:11 (330)
 3:13 (220)
 3:14-16 (290)

4:2 (402)
 4:12 (195)
 4:13 (179)
 4:14-16 (327, 329)
 4:16 (125)

5:7-9 (327)
 5:8-9 (137)
 5:9 (288)

 6:4-6 (71)
 6:12ff (542)
 6:12-20 (180)
 6:13-14, 17-20 (533)
 6:13-17 (533)
 6:17-20 (524)
 6:18-20 (534)

 7:14 (98, 494)
 7:18-19 (72)
 7:25 (288, 290, 301, 327,
 329, 345)

 8:7-9:17 (72)

 9:11ff (57)
 9:11-12 (264)
 9:11-12, 24-28 (266)
 9:11-10:10 (479)
 9:15-17 (480)
 9:22 (57)

 10:1-18 (266)
 10:10, 29 (299)
 10:30-31 (249)

11:1 (527)
 11:2ff (527)

11:3 (191)
 11:7 (97, 505)
11:8-10 (357)
 11:11-12 (97)
 11:17-19 (388, 529)
 11:23-29 (110)
 11:39-40 (480, 533)
 11:39-12:2 (534)

12:1-2 (533)
 12:9 (194)
 12:14 (297, 299, 329)
 12:24 (96)
 12:28 (507)
 12:29 (221, 249, 250)

13:8 (460)
 13:12 (299)
 13:14 (460)

James
 1:12-15 (23)
 1:13-16 (219, 221)
1:14-15 (284)
 1:27 (222)

2:5 (144)
 2:8-11 (219)
 2:10 (46)
 2:14ff (527)

3:9-10 (194)

4:1 (18)
 4:1-3 (219)
 4:4 (56)

1 Peter
 1:1-2 (460)
 1:2 (298)
 1:2, 15 (300)
 1:3 (534)
 1:3-9 (289)
 1:5 (290)
1:8 (119)
 1:9-18 (288)
1:10-12 (6, 131, 151, 164, 285, 342, 508, 540, 551)
 1:11, 21 (312)
1:13-21 (55)
 1:14, 18 (289)
 1:15 (46, 219, 221, 297)
 1:15-17 (180)
 1:16 (234)
 1:17-21 (57, 164)
 1:18-20 (126, 151, 264, 265, 508, 537)
 1:20-24 (265)
 1:21 (533)

2:1-3 (295)
 2:4-10 (515)
 2:5-11 (342)
 2:12 (460)

2:21-24 (328)
 2:21-25 (250)
2:24 (42, 243, 246, 252)

3:15 (513)
 3:18-22 (97)
 3:19-20 (195)
 3:20 (195)

4:11 (312)
 4:14ff (312)

5:1 (314)
 5:8 (31, 35)
 5:10 (312, 313)

2 Peter
 1:1 (233)
 1:1-11 (289)
 1:3-4 (288)
 1:5-8 (300)
 1:5-11 (461)
 1:16-18 (136, 314)
 1:16-21 (551)
1:19-21 (5, 546)

2:4 (79, 193)
 2:5 (97)
2:9 (460)

3:8-9 (287)
 3:18 (300, 301)

1 John

1:1-4 (71, 136)

1:5 (234)

1:5-10 (71)

1:8 (222)

2:1 (345)

2:1-2 (329)

2:2 (248, 252, 479)

2:15-17 (23, 34, 56)

3:1-2 (144, 338)

3:2 (314)

3:3 (301)

3:4 (24, 46, 219, 220)

3:6-12 (83)

3:7-10 (33)

3:7-12 (32)

3:8 (85, 329)

3:8, 10, 12 (95)

3:9-14 (300)

3:18 (84)

4:4 (30)

4:8, 10, 16 (180)

4:9-10 (252, 326)

4:10 (248, 253, 479)

4:14 (328)

5:4-5, 19-21 (127)

5:13 (71)

5:16-17 (71)

5:17 (220)

5:19 (28, 31)**Jude**

v. 4 (221)

v. 6 (79, 193)

v. 23 (222)

v. 24 (460)

Revelation

1:5 (264, 329)

1:17-18 (85, 329)

2:7 (127)

3:7 (111)

3:19 (250)

4:11 (191)

5:9-10 (264, 340)

5:9-11 (507)

5:12 (120)

7:1ff (460)

12:7ff (31)

**12:9 (28, 31, 79, 206,
220)**

12:9-10 (33)

12:11 (460)

12:17 (127)

13:8 (181)

14:1-5 (460)

14:18-20 (249)

16:19 (249)

17:14 (14, 127)

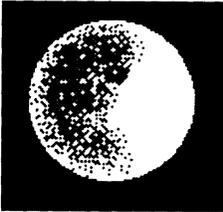
19:15 (249)

21:10-14 (406)

22:1-5 (57)

22:16 (111, 509)

22:17 (330)



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