

Collected Sunday School Lessons

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2008 – 2009

written for the “vim and vigor” class
(with a few extras thrown in)

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Soli Deo Gloria

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	10
Cain.....	13
Catholicism.....	22
Part 1: Doctrines of Salvation.....	22
1. Salvation by Works.....	22
2. Salvation by Sacraments.....	24
3. Salvation by the Catholic Church.....	26
4. Purification by Purgatory.....	27
5. Forgiveness by Indulgences.....	28
6. Forgiveness by Penance.....	29
7. The Catholic Defense.....	29
8. Conclusion.....	31
Part 2: History.....	32
Persecutions During The First Millennium.....	32
Persecutions During 1000 - 1500.....	33
Persecutions During 1500 - 1900.....	38
Persecutions During the 20th Century.....	45
In Conclusion.....	47
Appendix A: The Spanish Inquisition.....	48
Incarnate Crowns.....	52
Pre-Tribulation Rapture.....	55
Festivals and Holy Days.....	61
The Sabbath.....	62
The Passover.....	64
The Feast of Unleavened Bread.....	66
The Festival of Firstfruits.....	67
Pentecost.....	68
The Festival of Trumpets.....	70
The Day of Atonement.....	72
The Feast of Tabernacles.....	73
The Sons of Adam.....	75
The Nephilim.....	80
Heaven.....	84
The Criminal on the Cross.....	84
The Rich Man and Lazarus.....	85
The Unrighteous Steward.....	87
The Martyrs.....	88
Time.....	88
Animals.....	89
The End of the Earth.....	90
The Great White Throne Judgment.....	91

The New Heaven and Earth.....	92
The Final State.....	92
Treasures and Rewards.....	94
In The Beginning.....	98
Appendix: The Ocean in the Sky.....	108
Justice.....	111
In The Beginning.....	112
The Mosaic Law and Justice System.....	114
The Trial.....	115
Methods of Execution.....	119
Cities of Refuge.....	120
Capital Crimes.....	123
Non-Capital Crimes.....	127
Other Crimes.....	129
Waging War.....	131
Regulations for Kings.....	134
The Levitical System.....	137
Blood Atonement.....	137
The Levites.....	138
The Temple.....	143
The Ark of the Covenant.....	144
The Holy Place.....	146
The Outer Court.....	149
The Urim and the Thummim.....	150
Messianic Prophecies.....	152
I. His Person.....	152
1. He would be a descendant of Abraham.....	152
2. He would be from the Tribe of Judah.....	153
3. He would be a son of David.....	153
4. He would be both God and man.....	154
5. He will live eternally.....	154
II. His Nature.....	155
1. He would be full of the Holy Spirit.....	155
2. He would be humble.....	155
3. He would be gentle.....	156
4. He would be the son of God.....	156
5. He would be the Good Shepherd.....	156
III. His Appearing.....	157
1. He would be born of a virgin.....	157
2. He would be preceded by a herald.....	157
3. He would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.....	158
4. He would be seen riding on a donkey.....	158
5. He would appear before 70 AD.....	158
IV. His Offices.....	158
1. He would be a king.....	158
2. He would be a priest.....	159
3. He would be a prophet.....	159

V. His Mission and Ministry.....	160
1. He would be specially trained.....	160
2. He would bring salvation to the Gentile nations.....	160
3. He would be rejected at first.....	160
4. He would appear to fail but would actually be successful.....	161
5. He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver.....	161
6. His rejection would result in an attack upon Israel and the scattering of the people.....	161
7. He would eventually be accepted.....	162
8. He would be seated at the right hand of God.....	162
VI. His Suffering and Death.....	162
1. He would suffer.....	162
2. He would be tried and condemned to death.....	163
3. He would die.....	163
4. He would die a violent death by means of piercing.....	164
5. His death would be substitutionary.....	164
6. His death would result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.....	164
7. He would be buried in a rich man's tomb.....	164
8. He would be resurrected.....	165
9. He would bring justification to those who believe in Him.....	165
Rules of Interpretation.....	166
1. If plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.....	166
2. Interpret Scripture with Scripture.....	167
3. Context is everything.....	168
4. Mind the gaps.....	169
Sabbath Keeping.....	171
The Sacrificial System.....	175
Commitment Offerings.....	175
Communion Offerings.....	178
Cleansing Offerings.....	180
Conclusion.....	183
Evidence for Creation.....	185
Part 1: Mutations.....	185
Part 2: Monkeys Typing Shakespeare.....	188
Part 3: The Age Of The Earth.....	189
Part 4: Radioactive Dating Methods.....	191
Part 5: Dinosaurs And The Bible.....	191
The Flood.....	195
How Did Noah Fit All the Animals on the Ark?.....	197
What Did the Dinosaurs Eat?.....	197
How Were the Animals Cared For?.....	197
How Did the Animals Breathe?.....	198
What Did Noah and His Family Do with the Animal Waste?.....	198
The Tower of Babel.....	206
Tithing.....	209
Treasure in Heaven.....	217

To Donnie and Kelly
two humble saints of God
without whose encouragement
this book would never have been put together

INTRODUCTION

For a period of just over a year, from 2008 to 2009, I taught the high school Sunday School class at a small Baptist church. It was truly a wonderful time. I was blessed with a fantastic group of bright and eager students that were hungry for the Word and dedicated to using their lives to honor Christ. Being their teacher was an honor and a joy. They were such terrific examples of Christianity in action.

At that time the church did not have curriculum for their classes, so I ended up writing all of my lessons myself. After putting together a bunch of notes on a subject I would teach on it for a while and then move on to another topic.

This book is a collection of those notes. In some cases they are very detailed examinations of particular doctrines, but in others they are little more than a rough collection of notes. These lessons were never handed out to the class; they were just put together so I would have something to teach from. I have also included a handful of lessons that I taught in other classes or that I wrote for other purposes.

I hope that these lessons are blessing to you. It was truly a joy to go through the Word of God and learn more about my Savior. There's nothing quite like teaching a class to discover how little one actually knows. The Bible is full of awesome mysteries and hidden treasures just waiting to be uncovered. There's vast spiritual wealth out there, if only we'll take the time to go and dig it up.

Blessings to you all.

Jonathan K. Cooper
February 20, 2010

CAIN

In Genesis 3 mankind suffered a devastating Fall and was evicted from the Garden of Eden. As we all know, however, that is not the end of the story. In the next chapter Adam and Eve start a family:

Genesis 4:1: “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.”

Cain was born before Abel, which makes him Abel's older brother. The text doesn't say how many years separated the two brothers, but it does seem safe to say that Cain and Abel were Adam and Eve's first two sons.

According to Strong's Concordance, the name Cain means “spear” and the name Abel means “vanity”. These names are actually important – there's something going on here that is not immediately apparent. You see, the Hebrew text of verse 1 does not have the words “from the”; that phrase was added by translators. What the verse actually says is this: “I have gotten a man, the Lord”.

The reason this is significant is because when God judged the serpent in the Garden of Eden He made a promise:

Genesis 3:14: “And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Verse 15 is actually a Messianic prophecy that looks forward to the crucifixion. The crucifixion accomplished two things: Christ died (and thus the reference to “bruise his heel”), and Satan was defeated (and thus the reference to “bruise thy head”). Eve understood this prophecy and assumed that her firstborn son Cain was the promised Messiah – “the Lord”. She named him “spear” because she thought that God would use him to destroy the devil. She must have realized her mistake pretty quickly, though, because she named her second son “vanity”. Eve thought that the Messiah was going to come immediately, but the Messiah did not actually come until approximately 4,000 years later.

The Bible does not tell us anything about the childhood of Cain and Abel. What we do know is that one day the two brothers made offerings to the Lord:

Genesis 4:3: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. . .”

People have made a lot of assumptions about these verses that are not actually true. For example, there is no evidence that God commanded them to give this offering. The Mosaic Law does have a long list of required offerings, but that Law was not given until thousands of years later. The laws that Moses gave regarding sacrifices and offerings *cannot* be applied to these verses! Cain and

Abel would have been completely unaware of them. There is no hint in the passage that God had required something or that Cain and Abel were trying to get their sins forgiven.

We also need to realize that Cain's offering is the first one that is mentioned. It is quite likely that *Cain* made his offering first, and Abel only made his offering *after* Cain did. There is no evidence that Cain was copying Abel. In fact, the very first person ever recorded as making an offering to God is *Cain*.

Some people have argued that God was upset with Cain's offering because it was “of the fruit of the ground”, while Abel's offering was “of the firstlings of his flock”. It is true that Abel offered a blood sacrifice and Cain did not. However, there is nothing in the text to indicate that grain offerings were prohibited. When people today think of offerings they usually think of animal sacrifices, but the levitical system had other types of offerings as well. There were even grain and drink (wine) offerings! Even if the Mosaic Law was binding at the time (and it was *not*), a grain offering would have been perfectly fine. The issue had nothing to do with *what* Cain offered.

What we see is that Cain offered something he had grown and Abel offered something he had raised. Both gave of the work of their hands. The offering was something they had raised, not something they purchased. Cain was a farmer and offered the bounty of his land; Abel was a shepherd and offered the bounty of his flock. They were both perfectly logical choices and they both made sense. *The problem was not the offering itself.*

(As a side-note, notice that the professions of farming and raising sheep appeared extremely early in human history! It did not take people millions of years to learn how to farm or how to raise livestock. Early man was quite intelligent. Cain and Abel were *not* brutish cavemen who spent their time grunting at each other. The advancement of mankind was extremely rapid.)

The passage goes on to say that the Lord had very different reactions to the two offerings:

Genesis 4:4: “. . . And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:
5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. . .”

Notice the very precise language of this passage. We tend to focus on the offerings, but the Bible clearly says that “the Lord had respect unto *Abel* and to his offering”. The actual person is mentioned *before* the offering! The verse is not saying “The Lord respected Abel's offering, and that offering made Abel acceptable to God”. What it actually says is this: “The Lord respected Abel, and therefore He respected Abel's offering”. The reason the Lord had respect for Abel's offering is because *He respected Abel*. The reason the Lord rejected Cain's offering is because *He did not respect Cain*.

The same thing is true today. Jesus had tremendous respect for the small offering of the poor widow, even though the monetary amount that she gave was utterly insignificant:

Mark 12:41: “And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.
42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.
43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:
44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

However, God has no respect at all for the offerings of the wicked, regardless of how large they might be:

Proverbs 15:8: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”

Proverbs 15:29: “The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.”

People who don't know the Lord often think that if they just give money to the poor, or make a donation to church, or do some good deed, that the Lord will see their offering and accept them. However, they are quite wrong. The Lord *despises* the gifts and offerings of the wicked. Their sacrifices are an abomination in His sight. He does not hear their self-righteous prayers and He does not accept their gifts. You cannot earn God's favor by bribing Him with gifts because God cannot be bought. God will only accept your gifts *if He has already accepted you*. It does not work the other way around. In fact, Jesus gave a stern warning about this:

Matthew 7:21: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Jesus is saying that when He returns there will be many people who think they are Christians but who will end up rejected. The true Christian is one who has repented of his sins and believed on Christ (which, according to John 6:40, is “the will of my Father”). However, there are many false Christians who have rejected the lordship of Christ and have refused to turn their lives over to Jesus. Instead, they have based their salvation on their own works. They spend their lives doing “many wonderful works” and assume that those works are buying God's favor. When Jesus returns they will try to claim that their works have earned them salvation, and they will be rejected. Jesus will plainly tell them “I *never* knew you”. They were never saved at all; they were just deluding themselves. You cannot earn your salvation through works and you cannot bribe God into liking you. A Christian's relationship with God is based on grace, not works.

Cain and Abel are a classic example of this. Both brothers made offerings to God. The works were the same, but Cain was rejected and Abel was not! What's the difference between Cain and Abel? The New Testament tells us that it was a matter of *faith*:

Hebrews 11:4: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

In other words, *Abel had faith* and Cain did not. Abel made his offering in faith and God respected that faith. Cain lacked faith and so God rejected his offering. Faith and faith alone was the difference between Cain and Abel. (It is also the difference between every saved person and every lost

person.)

Cain quickly realized that he had been rejected, and he did not take it very well:

Genesis 4:5: “. . .And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”

Cain noticed that God accepted Abel and rejected him. Instead of seeking understanding and repentance, however, Cain simply got angry about it. The Lord warned him that he was going down the wrong path but Cain ignored God's warning. Rather than repenting of his sin and turning from it, he chose to seek out and murder the one who had faithfully served the Lord:

Genesis 4:8: “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”

The fact that Cain would actually murder Abel is rather astonishing. Cain had to know that he wouldn't get away with it. When Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord was immediately aware of it and confronted them. Cain would have known this but it didn't stop him. If Cain wanted to keep this a secret he failed spectacularly – this is one of the most famous murders in all of history! The one fact that everyone knows about Cain is that he murdered his brother.

The New Testament tells us exactly why Cain did this:

1 John 3:12: “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.”

In other words, Cain was furious that his brother was righteous. He couldn't stand the fact that his brother was not wicked, so he went out and killed his brother. Cain had a passionate hatred for righteousness, and that hatred drove him to murder the one person who had been declared righteous.

Nothing has really changed over the years. The world still hates righteousness and it still hunts down and kills those who are righteous. Jesus put it this way:

John 15:18: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

Abel was simply the first person to experience this. Since he was righteous, the world hated him. Since he loved the Lord, the world hunted him down and murdered him. If we are righteous then we can expect the world to hate us as well. The world that hated Jesus will never love His followers.

As we all know, Cain did not get away with his scheme. The Lord confronted him about it, just as He confronted Cain's parents in the Garden of Eden:

Genesis 4:9: “And the Lord said unto Cain, where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?”

When Adam sinned and the Lord confronted him, Adam tried to shift the blame to his wife. Cain, however, takes a more direct approach: he just tells a blatant lie (a lie that is tinged with disrespect and thinly-veiled contempt). Unfortunately for Cain, the Lord knows everything. God did not question Cain because He noticed that Abel was missing and wasn't sure what had happened to him. Whenever the Lord asks questions it is for *our* benefit, not His. God knew perfectly well that Cain had killed his brother. This was simply the first step in Cain's judgment.

This does bring up a question, though: why did God talk directly to Cain? Why didn't someone just call the police and have Cain arrested? Why is Cain getting the same treatment that Adam and Eve got in the Garden of Eden?

Well, it's important to note that human government was not instituted by God until *after the Flood*. When Noah and his family finally left the Ark the Lord changed a number of things. One of those things was making mankind responsible for the execution of justice:

Genesis 9:5: “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

This is why governments and the police have the right to hunt down and prosecute criminals. Not only has God given them that right, but He has actually commanded them to exercise it. Notice, though, that these verses appear in Genesis 9, not Genesis 4. There was no justice system in place when Cain was alive. Instead, God apparently handled things personally. This is just one of the many ways in which life was quite different before the Flood. Throughout history God periodically changed the rules, and this is one example of this. (Theologians refer to this as different *dispensations*. That, however, is a topic for another time.)

Cain's attempt to deny any knowledge of what happened to his brother did not fool God. The Lord confronted Cain directly with what he had done:

Genesis 4:10: “And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.”

Nothing that we do is hidden from God; He knows everything and sees everything. People may think that they are “getting away with it”, but they are not. God is simply biding His time until the day of judgment, when all sins that are not covered by the blood of Christ are judged once and for all. No one will get away with anything; all sins that are not forgiven will be brought up and judged. There is no escaping God and there is no hiding from Him.

God did not kill Adam and Eve when they sinned, and He does not kill Cain either. Instead He curses him – just as He had cursed Cain's parents:

Genesis 4:11: “And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her

mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;
12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."

The curse is very similar to the one that we find in Genesis 3. Since Cain was a farmer, God cursed his livelihood. The ground would no longer yield crops for him. With his profession taken from him he would be a fugitive and a vagabond.

Why didn't God just kill Cain? Well, think of it this way: if God killed us the first time we sinned, how many of us would live long enough to be saved? The Bible tells us that God is longsuffering and merciful. He withholds His final judgment in order to give men a chance to repent:

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

Some people accept this opportunity and repent, while others – like Cain – do not. All Cain does is complain about it:

Genesis 4:13: "And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me."

Notice that Cain shows absolutely no remorse for what he's done. Instead he immediately starts complaining that God isn't being fair! Keep in mind that *Cain just killed his own brother*. Cain expresses no gratitude that God didn't strike Cain dead on the spot (as God later did to others throughout the Old and New Testament). There isn't even any sense of shame! Cain is just a remorseless murderer who lashes out at the very God who showed him mercy.

Some people may wonder why Cain was worried about being killed by other people. After all, aside from his parents, who else was there around to kill him? In order to answer this question we need to realize a couple things.

First of all, when Cain slew Abel the two of them were probably at least a hundred years old. This can be calculated from the fact that the Lord gave Adam and Eve another son (Seth) after Abel was killed, and according to Genesis 5:3 this other son was born when Adam was 130. If we assume that Seth was born shortly after Abel was murdered, then it seems pretty likely that Cain and Abel were *not* teenagers. The brothers could have easily been more than a hundred years old.

Second, Adam and Eve probably had other children in the decades that passed between the birth of Abel and the birth of Seth. These children could have had children of their own, and even grandchildren, long before Cain murdered Abel. Seth was almost certainly *not* Eve's third son. There was enough time for several generations to be born. There could have been dozens of people alive when the murder took place – perhaps more than a hundred, depending on how many children Eve had and how soon her children had children of their own.

To answer the common question "Who did Cain marry?", the answer is that he probably married his sister. It is true that the Mosaic Law forbids this, but the Mosaic Law was not given until thousands of years later. Before the time of Moses siblings were allowed to get married – in fact,

Abraham married his half-sister Sarah.

Why did God change things? Well, it's important to remember that when God created mankind our genetic code was perfect and free from mutations. Under those circumstances inbreeding would not have caused any problems. It was only millennia later, when mutations had crept into our DNA, that inbreeding would cause serious harm. When the situation changed God changed the rules.

As we can see from the passage, Cain – who had no concern whatsoever for his brother's life – was concerned about *his* life. He was afraid that someone might kill him and he wanted God to do something about it. Stop and think about that for a moment! Cain, who killed his brother, *doesn't want other people to kill him*. He demands divine protection *from other murderers*. He apparently believes that it's ok for *him* to go around killing people, but no one should be allowed to kill *him*.

Amazingly, the Lord heard Cain:

Genesis 4:15: “And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.”

The Lord protected Cain by putting a mark upon him. No one knows exactly what that mark was; the passage does not say. (It is also important to note that no one today has somehow inherited the mark of Cain. All of mankind is a descendent of Noah, and Noah descended from Seth, not Cain. There is also no evidence that the mark was something that could be passed down genetically.) Whatever the mark was, it must have been effective because Cain went on to build a city and have children of his own (who, apparently, were as evil as he was).

Cain's death is not recorded so it's not known how long Cain lived. Before the Flood most people lived to be around 900 years old, so Cain may have lived for another 800 years. At some point, however, he died, and had to face the God that he so despised. The judgment of God was delayed, but it was not put off forever.

It's interesting to note that after this conversation Cain went as far away from God as possible:

Genesis 4:16: “And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.”

The passage does *not* say that Cain was evicted from the presence of the Lord, or that the Lord drove him off. Cain *chose* to leave God and moved to the land of Nod. There he had children and built himself a city:

Genesis 4:17: “And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch; and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.”

It should be noted that this is *not* the famous Enoch who never died; that was another person entirely. It's also interesting that Cain did not take up residence inside a cave; instead he built a *city*. Ancient man did not consist of dumb cavemen! It takes a lot of intelligence to build a city, and the fact that Adam's children were *building cities* should make us sit up and take notice. These people were not cavemen! They were city dwellers and had civilization.

Cain's line did not end with Enoch. He had grandchildren and great-grandchildren, some of whom were quite clever and created some pretty important inventions:

Genesis 4:18: “And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech.

19 And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

20 And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.

21 And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.

22 And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.”

As you can see, Cain's children were not dummies. By seven generations after Adam (Cain, Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Methusael, Lamech, and Lamech's children) mankind had already invented animal husbandry and music, and had entered the brass and iron age (at the same time). They were not scratching out a meager existence in a cave somewhere – they were building a civilization!

As a side-note, it takes intelligence to invent musical instruments – and this was not just *a* musical instrument, but *the first musical instruments ever to exist* in all of history. These were very intelligent people. They were *not* moral people, however, as the chapter goes on to tell us:

Genesis 4:23: “And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.

24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.”

Cain's children were no different from Cain. He had created a line of murders who thought only of themselves. Evil was on the rise in humanity, and this trend would ultimately lead to the Flood.

Genesis 4 is not the last time that Cain is mentioned; Cain and Abel are referred to in the New Testament as well. We have already discussed Hebrews 11:4 and I John 3:11. Another mention can be found in Jude:

Jude 1:11: “Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.”

Those who follow their own path instead of God are said to be going in “the way of Cain”. He is forever remembered as one deeply associated with evil. That is a remarkable legacy.

Christ referred to Abel as the first martyr:

Matthew 23:34: “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.”

The Lord pronounced judgment upon the generation of His day and said that because they rejected Him they would have to pay for all the righteous blood that was ever shed, starting with the blood of Abel. This sentence was carried out when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD and killed more than a million people.

The book of Hebrews also mentions Abel:

Hebrews 12:24: “And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

Here Christ's death is contrasted with Abel's. Abel died a righteous death, but his blood only cried out for vengeance. Christ's death was different because He died a death of *atonement* and His blood washes away our sins. The blood of Jesus does indeed speak better things than the blood of Abel.

CATHOLICISM

There are many Protestants today who view Catholicism with tremendous favor and respect, believing that it is simply another “flavor” of Christianity. The reality is that Catholicism is an entirely different religion. Its views on Jesus, salvation, and the Bible are deeply heretical. It is not merely a different way of doing things; its teachings are as foreign to Christianity as the teachings of Islam and Buddhism.

I would like to take some time and examine some of the heretical teachings of Catholicism. In order to accomplish this I have divided this paper into two parts. The first part focuses on what the Catholic church teaches about salvation, and the second part focuses on the history of the Catholic church. It is my hope that after reading this paper you will have a much better understanding of Catholicism and will see how different it really is from Biblical Christianity.

Part 1: Doctrines of Salvation

This section is intended to cover what the Catholic Church teaches about salvation. I do not claim that all Catholics believe all of these points, but I *do* claim that they represent the official stance of Catholicism. There are many more points that I could have mentioned (mass, Mary, celibacy, statues, praying to the dead, etc.) but since space is limited I chose to focus on salvation.

1. Salvation by Works

The Catholic Church firmly *rejects* the idea of salvation by grace alone and believes in salvation by works. I first discovered this when reading the Council of Trent, a document prepared by a council held from 1545-1563 and reaffirmed by Vatican II in the 1960’s. I quote:

SIXTH SESSION, CANONS CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION: "If anyone says that justifying faith is ***nothing else than confidence in divine mercy***, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, ***LET HIM BE ANATHEMA***" (Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 12).

SIXTH SESSION, CANONS CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION: "If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA" (Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 24).

One could not ask for a clearer denial of salvation by grace alone¹. The Catholic Church damns

¹ Or salvation by faith alone, which is what “confidence in divine mercy” is.

anyone who believes that salvation is “nothing else than confidence in divine mercy”, and further damns anyone who believes that good works are merely the *fruit* of salvation instead of their *cause*². Those who think that believing in Jesus is all that it takes to be saved – that no good deeds on our part can add to or take away from our salvation – are condemned by the Catholic Church as heretics that are bound for hell³. This stands in stark contrast with the teachings of the Bible:

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ***Not of works***, lest any man should boast."

Titus 3:5: "***Not by works of righteousness*** which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

Romans 3:28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith ***without the deeds of the law.***"

There are many more Scriptures that I could quote, but the point is very clear. Those who believe that “man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”, as it says in Romans 3:28, are damned to eternal torment by the Catholic Church, which teaches that many good deeds are required in order to merit salvation⁴. However, this idea of “faith alone” is exactly what the Bible teaches! This should be enough to make it clear that the Catholic Church is not a Christian church, for God is very clear about what He thinks of salvation by works. Galatians 3:1-7 says this:

Galatians 3:1-7: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, ***Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*** Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that ***they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.***”

Galatians 2:21: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for ***if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.***"

God condemns the Catholic idea that we are made perfect by “good deeds” in the strongest possible terms. This is more than a heresy; it is another gospel entirely. You cannot be saved by a works gospel. I have heard Catholics claim that they do believe in salvation by grace, but they go on to define grace as the ability to keep the law *so that they can perform all the good works that God requires them*

² In the book of James the point is made that works are a sign of living faith. It does not make the point that works are the cause of that faith or that the works are required to preserve salvation.

³ And such people were burned at the stake, by the thousands, for centuries during the Middle Ages. No apologies for this have ever been issued. (Part 2 of this document will discuss this in greater detail.)

⁴ Deeds such as baptism, avoiding mortal sins, penance, the sacraments, and being a member of the Catholic Church.

to do in order to become saved⁵. This is a horrible perversion of the gospel. Anyone who believes that their good works are going to purchase them entrance into Heaven is not a Christian; he is another lost sinner on the road to Hell. Believing that your good works are going to purchase your salvation is *completely different* from believing that Christ's life and atoning death on the cross has already purchased your salvation.

2. Salvation by Sacraments

But the differences go even further. Catholicism teaches that baptism is required for salvation:

SEVENTH SESSION, CANONS ON BAPTISM: "If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, *not necessary for salvation, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA*" (Council of Trent, Canons on Baptism, Canon 5).

"Baptism not only *purifies from all sins*⁶, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature,' an adopted son of God, who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature,' member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 322, #1265)

"By Baptism *all sins are forgiven*, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 321, #1263. Also see pg. 257, #985)

And that the sacraments are required as well:

"The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 292, #1129)

"There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 289, #1113)

These statements make it clear that the Catholic Church does *not* believe that Christ's death on the cross was sufficient to save anyone; in order to be saved you have to add a great many things to Christ's death – things such as good works, baptism, sacraments, and so forth. Catholicism teaches that faith in Christ is not enough to be saved. The Bible, however, has a very different opinion:

⁵ I don't have the space to get into it here, but Catholicism teaches that salvation is a process, not a one-time event. It is a process because it requires a lifetime of good works to achieve, followed by time spent in purgatory, where you spend a very long time suffering for your sins. Only after all this is one finally saved. The idea of "being saved" is a Protestant idea, and it is one that the Catholic church condemns.

⁶ Thus flatly contradicting the Bible: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (*not the putting away of the filth of the flesh*, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is a "figure" (a symbol) – an act of obedience to God and a sign that we have been saved. The Bible denies that it "purifies us from all sins".

Romans 10:8-10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, ***thou shalt be saved***. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Acts 16:31: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ***thou shalt be saved***, and thy house."

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ***Not of works***, lest any man should boast."

The Bible clearly teaches that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you *will* be saved. There is no "might be saved" or "could be saved" or "will be saved as long as you don't commit any mortal sins" – it's just a plain, firm statement that is repeated over and over in the Scriptures. Yet Catholicism teaches that it is a *sin* to believe that you have already been saved⁷ – the sin of presumption! I quote here from the Catholic Encyclopedia:

"Presumption is here considered as a vice opposed to the theological virtue of hope. It may also be regarded as a product of pride. It may be defined as the condition of a soul which, because of a badly regulated reliance on God's mercy and power, ***hopes for salvation without doing anything to deserve it***⁸, or for pardon of his sins without repenting of them."

I can't imagine believing that you can possibly *deserve* to be saved! That, though, is what Catholicism is all about: building up enough credits with God in order to merit entrance to Heaven (in other words, "deserving it"). Yet the Bible is clear that you can *know* that you are saved. Salvation is a one-time event, not a process:

1 John 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may ***know that ye have eternal life***, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son ***hath everlasting life***: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

John 5:24: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, ***hath everlasting life***, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

John 6:47: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me ***hath everlasting life***."

John 6:40: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and ***believeth on him***, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the

⁷ Remember, Catholicism teaches that salvation is a process, not a one-time event.

⁸ In other words, having not yet lived a life of "good works".

last day."

Notice how it says that we *have* eternal life. Salvation is not something that I am looking forward to earning at some future date, if I play all my cards right; it is something that I *already have* because Christ purchased it for me with His own blood. The Bible contradicts the Catholic idea that my salvation is a long process that requires good works on my part. That teaching is just not Biblical and is an entirely different gospel.

3. Salvation by the Catholic Church

Despite what many people might tell you, Catholicism teaches that salvation can *only* be obtained through the Catholic Church. They claim that all non-Catholics will be damned to Hell forever:

"The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism explains: 'For it is through ***Christ's Catholic Church alone***, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.'" (1994 Catholic Catechism, Pg. 215, #816)

"...all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the [Catholic] Church which is his Body: Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that ***the Church***, a pilgrim now on earth, is ***necessary for salvation...***" (1994 Catholic Catechism, Pg. 224, #846)

Nowhere in the Scripture can one find the idea that membership in *any* church is required for salvation. Salvation is accomplished by faith in Jesus Christ, not through church membership:

Romans 10:13: "For whosoever shall ***call upon the name of the Lord*** shall be saved."

John 3:36: "He that ***believeth on the Son*** hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

This doctrine springs from the Catholic belief that that the sacraments are required for salvation. Since only the Catholic Church has the sacraments that they claim are necessary for salvation, you therefore cannot be saved apart from the Catholic Church. In order to be saved you must be a member of the Catholic Church, participate in the sacraments, be baptized into the Catholic Church, avoid mortal sins, and suffer in purgatory. That is a very far cry from "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

4. Purification by Purgatory

We are still not done. On top of all of this, Catholicism denies the idea that Christ suffered the punishment for our sins on the cross. It teaches that we must still suffer for them in a place called purgatory:

"All who die in God's grace and friendship⁹, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to **achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.**" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 2658, #1030)

"The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect..." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 268-269, #1031)

"The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent¹⁰." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 268-269, #1031)

The concept of purgatory is found nowhere in the Bible and has zero Scriptural support, and yet it is taught as doctrine by the Catholic Church. Purgatory is based on the idea that Christ did not suffer for my sins or purify me of them. I must still suffer for them before I can be made acceptable to God, and purgatory is where that happens. Catholicism teaches that Christ's death accomplished almost nothing: it doesn't save us (because without our good deeds we can never see Heaven), it doesn't guarantee us salvation (because one mortal sin would cause everything to be lost), and it doesn't even free us from the punishment of our sins (because we must still suffer for them in Purgatory).

Once again, the Bible is very clear about this:

Romans 5:9: "Much more then, being now **justified by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

Romans 3:24: "Being **justified freely** by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

1 Corinthians 6:11: "And such were some of you: but ye are **washed**, but ye are **sanctified**, but ye are **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus..."

Hebrews 9:26: "...but now once in the end of the world hath he (Jesus) appeared to **put away sin** by the sacrifice of himself."

Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now **no condemnation** to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

It couldn't be more clear: the Bible teaches that I *am* washed, sanctified, and justified. Not "will be" but "am". Christ paid for it all; there is nothing left for me to do. As the old hymn said, "nothing in

⁹ Note that it says "all who die in God's grace" – meaning, of course, all those who die having led a life of good works.

¹⁰ Meaning, of course, that the idea is found nowhere in the Bible. The Catholic Encyclopedia even comes out and says that this idea has no Scriptural basis.

my hand I bring / simply to Thy cross I cling.” Purgatory is yet another attempt at a works gospel: Catholicism teaches that *I* must earn my way to Heaven, *I* must deserve salvation, and *I* must take the punishment for my sins. However, Jesus Himself was clear that when we die we will go to be with Him – not go to suffer in a place called purgatory:

Luke 23:43: “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, ***Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.***”

Philippians 1:22: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and ***to be with Christ***; which is far better:"

5. Forgiveness by Indulgences

Indulgences were one of the major causes of the Reformation. Martin Luther’s attempt to rid the Catholic Church of indulgences failed, for they are still a part of official Catholic doctrine. They are defined in the dictionary as follows: “A partial remission of the temporal punishment, esp. purgatorial atonement, that is still due for a sin or sins after absolution.” The Catholic Catechism explains them this way:

"Through indulgences the faithful can obtain the remission of temporal punishment resulting from sin for themselves and also for the souls in Purgatory." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 374, #1498)

"Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 371-372, #1479)

The Catholic Church teaches that one can help the dead escape purgatory by obtaining indulgences from the Church! This is more salvation-by-works: not only can your good works help forgive your sins, but they can also help forgive the sins *of the dead*. This is very different from the simplicity of the gospel:

Ephesians 2:8, 10: "***For by grace are ye saved through faith***; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

The Bible does *not* support the idea that you can purchase forgiveness for your sins by giving money to the church. It also does not teach that you can buy forgiveness *for people who have already died*. Both of those ideas are deeply heretical.

6. Forgiveness by Penance

The Catholic Church teaches that asking God to forgive our sins is not enough. If we want to be forgiven then we must also perform penance:

"Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, ***the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends*** for the sin: he must 'make satisfaction for' or 'expiate' his sins. This satisfaction is also called 'penance.'" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 366, #1459)

"The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken ***on behalf of the dead***:" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 269, #1032)

In other words, the sinner must "make amends" through penance if they wish to return to "full spiritual health". This is talking about restoring our relationship with *God*, not our relationship with other people. Simply asking God for forgiveness is *not enough!* This is another attempt at salvation-by-works: if you *really* want to be forgiven then you've got to do something to *earn* God's favor. You can even perform penance *for the dead* to earn God's favor for them!

This stands in stark contrast to the Word of God:

Hebrews 10:17-18: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is ***no more offering for sin***."

Psalms 86:5: "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

Forgiveness is a free gift from God, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. It cannot be earned or deserved. If you are trying to bribe God into forgiving your sins then you have very badly lost your way. Trying to earn forgiveness and trying to earn salvation are the same thing. Both of those roads lead straight to Hell.

7. The Catholic Defense

I have heard Catholics claim that they do not need Scripture to support their doctrines¹¹ because there are sources of doctrine outside the Bible. Catholicism teaches that the Pope and church tradition can also provide truth, and Catholics often base their doctrines on sources of truth outside the Bible. (The sinlessness of Mary, for instance, was made doctrine by a Papal decree).

However, God made it *very* clear that the Bible is all we need, and there is *no room to add to it*:

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the

¹¹ In other words, they admit that their doctrines have no Scriptural basis, which is my whole point!

man of God *may be perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Proverbs 30:5-6: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. *Add thou not unto his words*, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

These verses sum it up well. They clearly state that the Bible is given to us that we may be furnished unto *all* good works – not just some, but *all*. If the Bible is all-sufficient then we don't need the Book of Mormon or the decrees of the Pope to tell us what Christianity really is.

More than that, there is no evidence in Scripture to support the office of the Pope or papal infallibility. Catholicism bases its entire church on a single passage in Matthew 16. They claim that Jesus made Peter the first Pope:

Matthew 16:18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Catholicism claims that the rock Jesus was referring to was Peter, saying that the word "Peter" means "rock". This is actually *not* the case. "Peter" refers to a small pebble, which is very different from the massive foundation stone that Jesus was referring to. Jesus was actually drawing a contrast here! He was telling Peter that although Peter was just a small stone, Jesus was going to build His church upon a solid Rock. The Bible is quite clear that this rock is *Christ*:

1 Corinthians 10:4: "... for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and *that Rock was Christ*."

Ephesians 2:20: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being *the chief corner stone*;"

Psalms 118:22: "The stone which the builders refused is become the *head stone of the corner*."

Acts 4:10-11: "...by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become *the head of the corner*."

1 Peter 2:7: "... the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made *the head of the corner*,"¹²

Psalms 18:31: "For who is God save the LORD? or *who is a rock save our God?*"

Deuteronomy 32:3-4: "... I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. *He is the Rock*..."

¹² Note that not even Peter claims that Peter was the rock!

Jesus is the Rock – not Peter! Nowhere does the Bible mention a Pope. Nowhere does Peter act like a Pope¹³. Nowhere does the Bible give the Pope the authority to issue infallible decrees that overrule the Bible¹⁴. It is also blasphemous to claim that the Pope is the head of *the* church¹⁵, because only Christ has that position:

Colossians 1:18: "And *he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church*: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he (Christ) might have the preeminence."

Ephesians 1:22: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him (*Christ*) *to be the head over all things* to the church,"

Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is *the head, even Christ*:"

Catholicism teaches that the Pope is the *supreme* pastor and teacher of *all* Christians:

"The Roman Pontiff... as *supreme* pastor and teacher of *all the faithful*..." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 235, #891)

Yet the Bible says that the *Holy Spirit* is the "supreme pastor and teacher":

John 14:26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, *he shall teach you all things*, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, *he will guide you into all truth*..."

Without a Pope, apostolic authority, and tradition, the Catholic Church has no way to support its many unbiblical doctrines. If you have based your entire faith on the office of the Papacy, what is left when the Bible claims that *there is no such office* and that the many new unbiblical doctrines issued by the Pope are not worth the paper they are printed on?

8. Conclusion

By this point it should be obvious that the Catholic church is not a Christian church – and I haven't even touched on the subject of idolatry, the worship of Mary, or the many other pagan Catholic

¹³ In fact, there is no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome at all; when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans he greeted many people that were in Rome, but Peter was not one of them.

¹⁴ As happened when the Pope declared Mary to have been born without the inherited sin of Adam and lived an entirely sinless life, thus contradicting the Biblical doctrine that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

¹⁵ As opposed to the head of "a church", for instance.

doctrines¹⁶. Catholic salvation is not salvation through faith alone; it is salvation by works. The gospel of salvation by works *is not capable of saving anyone*. It leads only to Hell.

I want to be very clear here: anyone who believes in Catholicism's official stance regarding the gospel is *not* a Christian, is *not* saved, and is going to spend eternity in Hell unless they repent and come to Christ. The Catholic church is a pagan cult that is full of "doctrines of devils"¹⁷, and it should not be considered another denomination of Christianity. It is as pagan and false as Islam or Buddhism.

Part 2: History

It is commonly assumed by many that the Catholic church was the *only* church through the ages and that this did not change until the Reformation. However, this is *not* the case. As soon as Catholicism started to appear there have been those who opposed it and who believed in the gospel of salvation by faith alone. The Protestant church has always existed – and the Catholic church has always opposed it.

Persecutions During The First Millennium

Augustine (354 – 430) has been called the founder of Roman Catholicism, for he was instrumental in establishing many key doctrines of the Catholic church. The Catholic church has acknowledged him to be one of their major teachers and has canonized him as a saint. Augustine taught that the entire Bible should be interpreted allegorically, and that:

“the Catholic Church, in its empirical form, was the kingdom of Christ, that the millennial kingdom had commenced with the appearing of Christ, and was therefore an accomplished fact.” (Encyclopedia Britannica)

He is the father of amillennialism. He taught that the sacraments were an actual means of grace, that Mary was sinless, that infant baptism was necessary (and that infants who were not baptized were lost), that there was a purgatory, and that the church had authority *over* the Bible (as opposed to the church being *under* the authority of the Bible). The Catholic church began to rise in the 4th century. It claimed that it was the only true church and that it had the power to *execute* those who disagreed with it.

Augustine laid the foundation for the persecution of Protestants, teaching that:

“It is, indeed, better that men should be brought to serve God by instruction than by fear of punishment, or pain. ***But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected.*** Many must often be brought back to their Lord,

¹⁶ For instance, the Pope (declared to be infallible on issues of morality and doctrine) has urged people to worship Mary as a co-redeemer with Christ and pray to her for forgiveness of sins. Worshiping anyone other than God cannot be called anything other than paganism.

¹⁷ Catholicism forbids its priests from getting married. Forbidding people to marry is called a “doctrine of devils” in 1 Timothy 4:1-3. These are God's words, not mine.

like wicked servants, by the rod of temporal suffering, before they attain the highest grade of religious development.”

Leo the Great, the first Pope, drew upon this teaching from Augustine and declared that death was the appropriate penalty for heresy.

While this was going on a group called the **Donatists** formed and opposed Augustine's teachings. They taught that the church should only be comprised of those who showed evidence of repentance and faith. Because the Donatists (also called Puritans for their belief that the church should be pure) refused to join the centralized church system and rejected Augustine's teachings, the Catholic church joined with the secular authorities of the day and *put many of the Donatist leaders to death* and forced the rest into exile. This pattern would be repeated many times during the next fifteen centuries.

It is commonly assumed that the Bible did not become available until the time of Gutenberg. This is not the case; there were a number of editions of the Bible available during the first millennium. A version in Old Latin was translated around 157 AD, and Coptic and Syriac versions were made around that same time. A Gothic and Ethiopian translation was done in the fourth century. In the fifth century the Bible was translated into Roman, Indian, Persian, Armenian, Scythian, Samaritan, Egyptian, Georgian, and Armenian. In the sixth century the Gregorian translation was made. In the seventh century a German and Anglo-Saxon translation was made. The Persic translation was made in the eighth century, and the Bohemian and Slavonic versions were made in the ninth century. An Arabic translation was made in the tenth century.

In 660 AD a group called the **Paulicians** arose. This group had obtained a copy of the New Testament and sought to establish their faith strictly upon the teachings of the Bible. They rejected the teachings of Catholicism, and because of this they were hunted down by the Catholic church and executed (usually by being burned at the stake) *and their Bibles were burned*. This persecution caused them to flee their home of Greece and scatter all around the world. Wherever they went they were persecuted and executed by the Catholic church. The Catholics took great care to burn their Bibles, because their Bibles had given rise to their faith in “Christ alone”.

Persecutions During 1000 - 1500

By the time the year 1000 rolled around the Catholic church had become the dominant church of the day. The Pope had succeeded in controlling all of the churches in the Western world and had imposed his dogmas on everyone, including the kings of the world. Yet through all this time there were groups opposed to Catholicism – groups like the Albigenses and Waldensians that the Catholic church did its very best to hunt down and burn at the stake. These groups were hounded all over the world for a single reason: they would not accept the authority of the Catholic church or its Pope, and they sought to live solely by the Word of God.

During the reign of **Pope Benedict VII (1012-1024)**, a synod was held at Toulouse “to consider the most effectual method to rid the province of Albigenses; and though the whole sect was in 1022 said to have been burnt, yet the emigrants from Bulgaria, coming in colonies into France, kept the seed sown, the churches recruited...” (Orchard, p. 178). The Catholic church had done its best to burn alive every last member of this group of Christians, and yet they still continued to grow.

What was this hated group like? A Catholic inquisitor wrote:

“They had the Old and New Testament in the vulgar tongue; and they teach and learn so well, that he had seen and heard a country clown **recount all Job, word for word**; and divers, who **could perfectly deliver all the New Testament**; and that men and women, little and great, **day and night, cease not to learn and teach**” (Orchard, p. 266).

An old manuscript outlining an 11th century Waldensian creed reads “In articles of faith, the authority of the Holy Scripture is the highest authority; and for that reason it is the standard of judging; so that whatever doth not agree with the word of God is deservedly to be rejected and avoided. The sacraments of the church of Christ are two, baptism and Lord's supper. That is the church of Christ which hears the pure doctrine of Christ, and observes the ordinances instituted by Him, in whatever place it exists” (Jones, *History of the Christian Church*, II, p. 56). For these beliefs the Catholic Church hunted them down, burned them alive, confiscated their goods, and burned their Bibles.

Pope Honorius II (1124 – 1130) stated this in his Decretals:

“And all heretics, of both sexes and of every name, we damn to perpetual infamy; we declare hostility against them; we account them accursed, and their goods confiscated; nor can they ever enjoy their property, or their children succeed to their inheritance; inasmuch as they grievously offend against the Eternal as well as the temporal king” (Wylie, *The Papacy*, 18988, p. 137).

What was their great heresy? It was rejecting the authority of the Catholic Church and refusing to bow down to the Pope. The persecution of the Albigenses began in the middle of the twelfth century, and a century later every one of them had been hunted down and executed. In 1146 a group of believers arose in the city of Cologne. They were labeled as heretics because they denied infant baptism, purgatory, the intercession of the saints, and other Catholic doctrines.

Around this time a group called the Waldensians arose. They translated the Bible into the common languages of the day (something the Catholic Church had strictly forbidden) and distributed it through the entire Western world. A 13th century Catholic Inquisitor by the name of Reinerius said this about the Waldensians:

“They can repeat by heart, in the vulgar tongue, **the whole text of the New Testament and great part of the Old**: and, **adhering to the text alone**, they reject decretals¹⁸ and decrees with the sayings and expositions of the Saints” (Faber, p. 492).

For this the Catholic Church did its very best to burn them all alive. **Lucius III (1181 – 1185)** issued in decree in 1181 saying:

“We declare all Puritans, Paterines, Poor of Lyons [Waldensians], &c. &c., to lie under a perpetual curse for teaching baptism and the Lord's Supper **otherwise than the church of Rome**” (Orchard, p. 194).

These Christians did not believe in transubstantiation, that the sacraments could save, or that baptism saved. Because of this they were labeled as heretics, hunted down, and burned at the stake.

¹⁸ Statements issued by the Pope, said to be binding on all Christians.

Celestine III (1191 – 1198) ordered that those who believed in the Bible should be burned – *and their Bibles should be burned as well:*

“In 1193, the pope sent Guy and Reiner, two legates, into France, with instructions of the most sanguinary description. Instead of making converts of the heretics, their orders were to **burn their leaders**, confiscate their goods, and disperse their flocks” (Orchard, p. 204).

The **inquisition** formally began under **Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216)**. By this point the persecution of those who rejected Catholicism had been going on for six hundred years, but Innocent III systematized it. He prohibited people from reading the Bible in their own language and ordered that heretics should be put to death. In the year 1215 Innocent III issued a statement that said this:

“that they shall be seized for trial and penalties, who engage in the translation of the sacred volumes, or who hold secret conventicles, or who assume the office of preaching without the authority of their superiors; against whom process shall be commenced, without any permission of appeal” (P. P. Callender, *Illustration of Popery*, 1838, p. 387).

Innocent III ordered that the Waldensians should be searched for diligently and executed *because they read the Bible in the language of the day*. According to a Catholic inquisitor, the Waldensians held that:

“They despise the decretals and the sayings and expositions of holy men and **cleave only to the text of Scripture**. ... They contend that **the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles is sufficient to salvation** without any Church statutes and ordinances, and affirm that the traditions of the Church are no better than the traditions of the Pharisees, insisting, moreover, that greater stress is laid on the observation of human tradition than on the keeping of the law of God.” (Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, I, p. 308).

The persecution of these people began in the 12th century and was still going on in the 17th century – *500 years later*.

What did the Catholic church do to these people for their rejection of its authority? One historian put it this way:

“Many of them were frozen to death, others were cast from high precipices and dashed to pieces. Some were driven into caverns, and by filling the mouths of their caves with fagots were suffocated. Others were hanged in cold blood, ripped open and disemboweled, pierced with prongs, drowned, racked limb from limb till death relieved them; were stabbed, worried by dogs, burned, or crucified with their heads downward. Fox relates one case in which four hundred mothers who had taken refuge in the Cave of Castelluzzo, some 2000 feet above the valley, entered by a projected crag, were smothered with their infants in their arms. And all the time that this gentle blood was flowing, that sanctified beauty known as Innocent III, drank it in like nectar from Paradise. Of the Wandensians and other murdered

sheep of Christ, he said: 'They are like Samson's foxes. They appear to be different, but their tails are tied together.' The blood-thirst of the Dominicans earned for them the stigma of 'Comini Canes,' or the 'Lord's Dogs'" (Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, I, pp. 311-2).

All of this was done by the command of the Pope – a man that the Catholic church teaches is infallible in matters of doctrine and morality. This persecution continued unabated for *fifteen centuries*. Wherever Christianity went, the Catholic church tried its very best to stamp it out.

It is not possible to do anything other than mention a small sampling of cases; even a partial treatment of Catholicism's persecution of Christians would fill an entire book. Over its history it executed *millions* of people for rejecting Catholicism and believing in Christ alone. These heretics were sought in every nation on earth so that they might be burned alive *and that their Bibles might be destroyed*. This is not a matter of one or two isolated cases; this is a pattern that started with Augustine and continued for 1500 years.

To say that the Catholic church executed millions of people is not an exaggeration. One historian said this:

“In the year 1209, a formidable army of cross-bearers, of forty days' service, was put in motion, destined to destroy all heretics. ... The cruelties of these Crusaders appear to have had no parallel; in a few months there were sacrificed about **two hundred thousand lives**, and barbarities practiced, before unheard of, all which met the approbation of Innocent the 3rd. Two large cities, Beizers and Carcassone, were reduced to ashes, and thousands of others, driven from their burning houses, were wandering in the woods and mountains, sinking daily under the pressure of want” (Orchard, *Concise History of the Baptists*, p. 211).

The Spanish Inquisition alone, under the reign of Pope Paul IV (1555-59) is calculated to have claimed the lives of 150,000 people. Many of these died by unimaginable tortures (see Appendix A at the end of this paper). In the sixteenth century, as the Reformation began to get under way, it is estimated that 900,000 Protestants were martyred by the Catholic church. The Catholic church did its very best to completely wipe off the face of the earth entire groups of Christians: Waldensians, Albigenses, Lollards, and others – groups that had hundreds of thousands of followers – to the point of *sending out armies* to hunt them down and execute them. The Catholic church did succeed in completely destroying some of these groups. In 1847 John Dowling, in his book *History of Romanism*, estimated that the Catholic church slaughtered *50 million people* between 606 AD and 1850. Why were these people put to death? Because they refused to bow down to Rome and sought to live solely by the Word of God. (As you can see in the various quotes throughout this paper, the Catholic church actually admits that they murdered countless people for the great “crime” of living by the teachings of the Bible – and they are not ashamed of it. In their eyes that is a crime worthy of death.)

Catholicism's hatred of the Bible through the centuries is legendary. I've already talked about how the Church confiscated people's copies of the Bible and burned them; this is a pattern that continued for centuries. **Pope Gregory IX (1227 – 1241)** prohibited people from owning Bibles and prohibited Bible translations from being made. The **Council of Toulouse (1129)** and the **Council of Tarragona (1234)** forbade people to possess *or read* translations of the Bible that were made in the common languages (the only languages that people could actually understand). Those who were found to possess Bibles (or even portions of them) were *executed* and their Bibles were burned.

I cannot possibly mention every Pope that stood up to oppose anyone who dared to reject official Catholic doctrine. **Alexander IV (1254 – 1261)** issued 38 bulls against “heretics”. **Pope Urban IV (1261 – 1264)** issued an anathema against “heretics” and all who opposed the Inquisition as soon as he became a Pope. **Pope Clement IV (1265 – 1268)** enlarged the Inquisition and broadened its scope. **Pope Gregory X (1271 – 1276)** ordered that all copies of the Bible that were translated into the common tongues of the day to be brought to Bishops and burned. **Pope Nicholas IV (1288 – 1292)** ordered many punishments to be inflicted both on “heretics” and on those who helped them. **Pope Honorius IV (1285 – 1287)** enacted two laws against heretics and affirmed the prohibition on owning copies of the Bible. **Pope John XXI (1316 – 1334)** ordered the Inquisitors to hunt down and destroy the Waldensians, as did **Pope Clement VI (1342 – 1352)**. This went on, and on, and on, starting at the time of Augustine. Christians were already being persecuted when the Reformation broke out; once it began to spread the persecution only intensified.

For fifteen centuries the Catholic church executed whoever it could find that rejected its authority, and burned any Bibles that were translated into the common languages of the day. All of this was ordered by men who claimed to be Christ's infallible and holy representative on earth (the Popes). For centuries before the Reformation the Catholic church never failed to persecute those it found that rejected its authority and believed in Christ alone.

As the Reformation began to get under way the **Council of Trent (1545 – 1564)** was held. The Council of Trent was reaffirmed by the Pope during Vatican II in the 1960's; it has not expired or been rescinded. I have already discussed some of the Council of Trent's teachings, but besides doctrinal matters *it also placed severe restrictions on owning Bibles:*

“Translations of the Old Testament may also be allowed, but only to learned and pious men, **at the discretion of the bishop**, provided they use them merely as elucidations of the vulgate versions, in order to understand the Holy Scriptures, and not as the sacred text itself. But translations of the New Testament, made by authors of the first class of this index, are allowed to no one, since little advantage, but much danger, generally arises from reading them. If notes accompany the versions which are allowed to be read, or are joined to the vulgate edition, they may be permitted to be read by the same persons as the version, after the suspected places have been purged by the theological faculty of some Catholic university, or by the general inquisitor. ...”

“Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience, that **if the Holy Bible translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to any one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it**, it is, on that point, referred to the judgment of the bishops or inquisitors, who may, by the advice of the priest or confessor, permit the reading of the Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue by Catholic authors, to those persons whose faith and piety they apprehend will be augmented, and not injured by it; and this permission they must have in writing. But if any one shall have the presumption to read or possess it without such written permission, he shall not receive absolution until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary. Booksellers, however, who shall sell, or otherwise dispose of Bibles in the vulgar tongue, to any person not having such permission, shall forfeit the value of the books, to be applied by the bishop to some pious use, and be subjected to such other penalties as the bishop shall judge proper, according

to the quality of the offence. **But regulars shall neither read nor purchase such Bibles without a special license from their superiors.**

“Finally, it is enjoined on all the faithful, that no one presume to keep or read any book contrary to these rules, or prohibited by this index. But if **any one keep or read any books composed by heretics, or the writings of any author suspected of heresy, or false doctrine, he shall instantly incur the sentence of excommunication**; and those who read or keep works interdicted on another account, besides the **mortal sin**¹⁹ committed, shall be **severely punished** at the will of the bishops.”

These rules were affixed to the Index of Prohibited Books and were constantly reaffirmed by popes in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. These publications have never been rescinded. One person said this about it:

“It is true that the Council of Trent did not *absolutely* forbid the reading of the Scriptures. It did allow a few exceptions. The priests were allowed to read the Latin Bible. Bishops and inquisitors were allowed to grant license for certain faithful Catholics to read the Scriptures in Latin as long as these Scriptures were accompanied by Catholic notes and if it was believed that these people would not be “harmed” by such a reading. ***In practice, though, the proclamations of Trent forbade the reading of the Holy Scriptures to at least nine-tenths of the people.*** Rome's claim to possess authority to determine who can and cannot read the Bible is one of the most blasphemous claims ever made under this sun.” (David Cloud, *Rome and the Bible*, p. 214).

Persecutions During 1500 - 1900

The Catholic church's attack on Christianity did not stop at the Council of Trent. Its power to inflict harm was greatly weakened after the Reformation, but its attitude and edicts did not change.

Pope Julius III (1550 – 1555) issued a series of bulls commanding the destruction of all heretical and Lutheran books. This included vernacular translations of the Bible. **Pope Paul IV (1555 – 1559)** prohibited the possession of Bible translations not permitted by the Inquisition. Those who were found to possess Bibles were executed. During his reign Inquisitors were dispatched from Rome to hunt down and destroy Waldensians. The Pope's Inquisitor-General, Cardinal Alexandrini, obtained a small army of soldiers to pursue the inhabitants of San Sexto, who had fled to avoid their tormentors:

“Tracking them to their hiding-places, in the thickets and the caves of the mountains, they slaughtered many of them; others, who escaped, were pursued with bloodhounds, as if they had been wild beasts. A group of the fugitives climbed to the Apennines, which was an almost inaccessible retreat high in the mountains,

¹⁹ Remember, the Catholic church teaches that mortal sins will condemn you to Hell forever. Essentially this states that if you, a “common person”, dared to own a Bible then you were condemned to Hell forever. Let me repeat that: Catholicism actually taught that owning a Bible *would condemn you to Hell*. That is how much they hate the Word.

and the army was unable to dislodge them. An edict was then issued by the viceroy, who was intent upon the destruction of these separatist Christians, promising a free pardon to all bandits, outlaws, and other criminals who might be willing to undertake the task of scaling the mountains and attacking the strongholds of the Waldenses. In obedience to this summons, there assembled a mob of desperadoes, who were but too familiar with the secret paths of the Apennines. Threading their way through the woods, and clambering over the great rocks, these assassins rushed from every side on the barricades on the summit, and butchering the poor Vaudois. Thus were the inhabitants of San Sexto exterminated, some dying by the sword ... while others were torn by bloodhounds or perished by famine" (Wylie, p. 116)

His persecution of Christians continued unabated:

"San Sisto was burnt; the women and children, subjected to every species of outrage, scattered through the mountains, where most of them were captured and sent to Cosenza ... Sentence of death was also pronounced against a hundred of the older women; the whole number of captives was reckoned at 1600, all of whom were condemned" (Lea, *The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependences*, 1908, p. 81-82).

"Some were thrown from the tops of towers, or precipitated over cliffs; others were torn with iron whips, and finally beaten to death with fiery brands; and others, smeared with pitch, were burned alive" (Wylie, *Histories of the Waldenses*, pp. 117-8).

"They were all shut up in one house as in a sheep-fold. The executioner went, and bringing out one of them, covered his face with a napkin, or *benda*, as we call it, led him out to a field near the house, and causing him to kneel down, cut his throat with a knife. Then, taking off the bloody napkin, he went and brought out another, whom he put to death after the same manner. In this way the whole number, amounting to eighty-eight men, were butchered" (Wylie, p. 117).

There are so many accounts of Christians being executed by the Catholic church during the Reformation that I cannot possibly include even a small portion of them. Many of the means of execution were horrible beyond belief. All of this was done at the command of Popes.

Pope Pius V (1566 – 1572) ordered the complete extermination of the Huguenots (the French Protestants). Tens of thousands of Christians were executed on the bases of this command. The Pope wrote this in a papal bull dated March of 1568: "If the crusaders die in the expedition their blood will serve them as a second baptism, washing out all their sins, and they will go with the other martyrs straight to Paradise". Under **Pope Gregory XIII (1572 – 1585)** the Massacre of St. Bartholomew (1572) was carried out, in which tens of thousands of Huguenots were murdered. The news of this massacre was met with celebration by the Pope, who decided to issue a commemorative medal to mark the occasion:

"The pope and his Cardinals proceeded at once to the High Altar, after the dispatches from Paris had been read in Conclae, to offer thanks for 'the great

blessing which Heaven vouchsafed to the Roman See and to all Christendom. Salvoes of artillery thundered at nightfall from the ramparts of St. Angelo; the streets were illuminated; and no victory ever achieved by the arms of the Pontificate elicited more tokens of festivity. The pope also, as if resolved that an indestructible edifice of the perversion of mortal feeling which Fanaticism necessarily generates should be transmitted to posterity, gave orders for the execution of a commemorative medal” (Smedley, II, p. 35)

By 1582 the Bible had been spread so far and wide by the Reformation that all efforts to stamp it out had utterly failed. At this point the Catholic church issued its own English Bible – the **Rheims-Douay**. Even though the translation was very poor, no Catholic was allowed to read it without a license. Between 1582 and 1750 (a span of 168 years) the New Testament was reprinted only three times and the Old Testament was only printed once. The Catholic church did not approve of an Italian version until 1778, a German version until 1830, or a French version until the 19th century.

The Council of Trent prohibited *anyone* from reading the Bible without a license. **Pope Clement VII (1592 – 1605)** forbade anyone from granting these licenses, thus prohibiting the common people from reading the Bible under any circumstances. He then sent “missionaries” to the valley of Piedmont *for the express purpose of destroying all Bibles in that area* and those who owned them. The Foxe's book of Martyrs records the activities of these Catholic “missionaries”:

This was followed by a most cruel order, published on January 25, 1655, which decreed that every family of the reformed religion, of whatever rank, residing in Lucerne, St. Giovanni, Bibiana, Campiglione, St. Secondo, Lucernetta, La Torre, Fenile, or Bricheraiisso, should, within three days after the publication thereof, depart from their habitations to such places as were appointed by the duke, on pain of death and confiscation.

This order produced the greatest distress among the unhappy objects of it, as it was enforced with the greatest severity, in the depth of a very severe winter, and the people were driven from their habitations at the time appointed, without even sufficient clothes to cover them: by which many perished in the mountains through the severity of the weather, or want of food. Those who remained behind after the publication of the decree, were murdered by the popish inhabitants, or shot by the troops, and the most horrible barbarities were perpetrated by these ruffians, encouraged by the Roman Catholic priests and monks... (Foxe, abridged, p. 163)

Nicholas Walsh was murdered while in the act of translating the first Irish New Testament. Others finished his work, and his translation was published in 1602. **Pope Paul V (1605 – 1621)** made it clear how he felt about all this in a papal bull:

“We excommunicate and anathematize, in the name of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and by the authority of his blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, and by our own, all Wickliffites, Hussites, Lutherans, Calvinists, Hugonots, Anabaptists, and all other Heretics, by whatsoever name they are called, and of whatsoever sect they be; and also, all Schismatics, and those who withdraw themselves, or recede obstinately from the obedience of the Bishop of Rome; as also their Adherents,

Receivers, Favourers, and generally any defenders of them: together with all, who, without the authority of the apostolic see, shall knowingly read, keep, or print, any of their books which treat on religion, or by or for any cause whatever, publicly or privately, on any pretense or color defend them” (Ouseley, *A Short Defense of the Old Religion*, 1821, p. 257)

The Pope made good on his word. During the next fifty years the Catholic church persuaded the governments of Europe to send out armies after groups such as the Waldensians and kill them. In 1655 the Marquis de Pianez led an army of 15,000 men out to hunt down and murder (in horrific ways) all the Waldensians in his land. A priest and a monk accompanied each party of soldiers to make sure that any copies of the Scriptures that were found were destroyed. One historian wrote this about the event:

“From the awful narration of Leger, we select only a few instances; but even these few, however mildly stated, grow, without our intending it, into a group of horrors. Little children were torn from the arms of their mothers, clasped by their tiny feet, and their heads dashed against the rocks; or were held between two soldiers and their quivering limbs torn up by main force. Their mangled bodies were then thrown on the highways or fields, to be devoured by beasts. The sick and the aged were burned alive in their dwellings. Some had their hands and arms and legs lopped off, and fire applied to the severed parts to staunch the bleeding and prolong their suffering. Some were flayed alive, some were roasted alive, some disemboweled; or tied to trees in their own orchards, and their hearts cut out. Some were horribly mutilated, and of others the brains were boiled and eaten by these cannibals. Some were fastened down into the furrows of their own fields, and plowed into the soil as men plow manure into it. Others were buried alive. Fathers were marched to death with the heads of their sons suspended round their necks. Parents were compelled to look on while their children were first outraged, then massacred, before being themselves permitted to die” (Wylie, *History of the Waldenses*, pp. 143,44).

Why was all this done? Why were these people hunted down and murdered? *Because they believed that they were saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and refused to become Catholics.* Since they would not join the Catholic church, the Catholic church did everything it could to execute and torment these believers in the most horrible ways imaginable. All of these things were done by a church that claims *to this day* to be the only true church of Jesus Christ. These were not wild rampages or isolated events; this was a systematic effort to execute every last Protestant on the planet, and it lasted from 400 AD to the 19th century. It only stopped with the Catholic church, by the mercy of God, lost all of its temporal power and became unable to continue killing every last non-Catholic they could find. They were not stopped because they had a change of heart; they were stopped because power was taken from them.

I could go on, with account after account like the one mentioned above. All of this is well-documented, and some of it was documented with *great pride* and glee by the Catholic authorities who carried it out. For example, during the reign of **Pope Innocent IX (1676 – 1689)** the entire nation of the Waldensians was forced from their dwellings in the mountains by an army of around 15,000 men; more than 10,000 were murdered.

In 1693 a Catholic cardinal named Pasquier Quesnel issued a document suggesting that, in his

words, “the reading of Holy Scripture is for all”. He suggested that it might be a good thing for the common people to read the Bible. **Pope Clement XI (1700 – 1721)** disagreed with this in the strongest possible terms in a papal bull:

“The suffrages of the aforesaid cardinals ... ***we declare, condemn,*** and reprobate respectively, by this our constitution, ***perpetually in force for ever,*** all and singular; the propositions before inserted, as false, captious, ill-sounding, offensive to pious ears, scandalous, pernicious, rash, injurious to the church and its practice... whosoever shall teach, defend, publish, or treat, even in disputation, publicly or privately... shall be subject, 'ipso facto,' and without any other declaration, to ecclesiastical censures, and the other punishments decreed by law against the perpetrators of similar things.” (Blakeney, *Popery and its Social Aspects*, pp. 76, 77)

Pope Benedict XIV (1740 – 1758) confirmed the Council of Trent's prohibitions against Bible translations. **Pope Pius VII (1800 – 1823)** *condemned* the Bible societies of the 19th century – organizations that sought to give copies of the Scriptures to common people:

“We have been truly shocked at this most crafty device, ***by which the very foundations of religion are undermined...***we have, with the utmost care and attention, deliberated upon the measures proper to be adopted by our pontifical authority, in order to remedy and abolish this pestilence as far as possible...” (Elliott, *Delineation of Roman Catholicism*, p. 20)

The Catholic church did *not* want people to own Bibles. The Pope was certain that Bible ownership would lead people away from Catholicism – and he was right. The teachings of the Catholic church are so blatantly unbiblical that anyone who reads the Bible can quickly see the Pope's many heresies. The Bible really *does* undermine the teachings of the *Catholic* religion.

One Catholic bishop wrote this in 1813. He perfectly illustrated what the Catholic church thinks about the Bible:

“The promiscuous reading of the Bible is not calculated, nor intended, by God, as the means of conveying religious instruction to the bulk of mankind: for the bulk of mankind cannot read at all; and we do not find any divine commandment as to their being obliged to study letters. ... In conclusion, then, by dearly beloved brethren, I am confident you will ***not encourage or countenance the distribution of Bibles*** or Testaments, among the very illiterate persons of your respective congregations, as proper initiatory books of instruction for them (Bishop Milner of Castabala, 1813: M'Gavin, *The Protestant*, p. 166)

Pope Leo XII (1823 – 1829) issued a bull in 1824 reaffirming the Council of Trent's prohibitions on Bible ownership and condemned the distribution of Bibles. As of the 19th century the Catholic Church had not changed its mind on Bible ownership in the least. By this point they had lost much of their power to execute those who held Bibles, but they still condemned it as strongly as they ever had. The Catholic Church condemned Bible ownership with perfect, unwavering consistency for 1,200 years. Romans 10:17 states that “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”, but the Roman Catholic Church did its very best to destroy every copy of the Word of God that

they could find.

Pope Pius VII (1829 – 1830) condemned the Bible societies of his day that distributed Bibles to people (much like the Gideons do today). **Pope Gregory XVI (1831 – 1846)** ratified the Council of Trent's prohibitions on Bible ownership. The Catholic church's attitude toward those who possessed Bibles had not changed: in 1843 on the Portuguese island of Madeira, a woman was imprisoned and condemned to death for being a Protestant and rejecting various Catholic doctrines (idol worship and transubstantiation). She only escaped execution when Protestants from other countries intervened on her behalf. Episodes like this were common in the 19th century; there are many instances of people being imprisoned for merely owning a Bible or not being Catholic.

Pope Pius IX (1846 – 1878) issued a letter condemning “those insidious Bible Societies”. Even at this late date, historians say that Bibles were so rare that many Catholics did not even know what a New Testament was. Students who went to papal seminaries did not even see Bibles during their stay at the seminary. The **Vatican I Council in 1870** reaffirmed the Council of Trent's decrees and prohibitions on Bible ownership – and its teachings on salvation. At the time of the American Civil War the Catholic church was *still* condemning ownership of the Bible and doing all that it could to stop those in its power from owning a copy of the Scriptures.

The Vatican I Council went further than this, declaring that all Popes were infallible and *could not be wrong*. The council issued this statement:

“We teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord the Roman Church possesses a **superiority of ordinary power over all other churches**, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate; to which all, of whatever rite and dignity, **both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound**, by their duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, to submit not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those that appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world, so that the church of Christ may be one flock under **one supreme pastor** through the preservation of unity both of communion and of profession of the same faith with the Roman pontiff. **This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and salvation.**”

“And since **by divine right of apostolic primacy the Roman pontiff is placed over the universal church**, we further teach and declare that he is the **supreme judge of the faithful**²⁰, and that in all causes the decision of which belongs to the Church recourse may be had to his tribunal, and that **none may reopen the judgment of the apostolic see, that whose authority there is no greater, nor can any lawfully review its judgment.**”

“If then, any shall say that the Roman pontiff has the office merely of inspection or direction, and not **full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal church, not only in things which belong to faith and morals, but also in those**”

²⁰ Notice that it does not say that *God* is the supreme judge of the faithful; it claims that the Pope is. God is not the head of the church; the Pope is. All Christians are not bound to God; they are bound to the Pope. It is not God who is said to have the greatest authority of anyone; no, it is the Pope. This is blatant paganism; it is very far removed from Christianity.

which relate to the disciple and government of the Church spread throughout the world; or assert that he possesses merely the principal part, and not the fullness of this supreme power; or that this power which he enjoys is not ordinary or immediate both over each and all the church and over each and all the pastors and the faithful; **let him be anathema**²¹.

“We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed; that the Roman pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, **is possessed of that infallibility** with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church. But if any one – which may God avert – presume to contradict this our definition: **let him be anathema**²².”

Interestingly enough, while the Vatican I Council was going on, at some point someone in the council wanted to refer to a Bible – but no one could find one. No one at the Council had a Bible – not the Pope, not any of the Cardinals, and not even the local Catholic church. In order to get a Bible they had to borrow one from a Protestant Chaplain at the Prussian Embassy.

Why did this happen? Because in 1870, when Rome was made the capitol city of Italy, the Pope decided to make sure that no Bibles were found in the city:

“a papal law required that copies of the Bible found in the possession of visitors be confiscated” (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VI, p. 727).

The Roman Catholic F. Curci stated this in 1879:

“The New Testament is of all books that which is least studied and read amongst us, insomuch that the greater part of the laity, even such as are instructed and practicing believers, do not so much as know that such a book exists in the world, and the majority of the clergy themselves scarcely know more of it than they are obliged to read in the Missal and Breviary” (Curci, *Avvert. Prelim. In N.T.*, cited in Littledale, *Plain Reasons*, p. 94).

²¹ In other words, if you do not believe that the Pope is God Himself, or if you disagree with what the Catholic church teaches about the Pope, then you are condemned to spend eternity in Hell *no matter what your relationship with Jesus Christ is*. The Pope is said to have “supreme power”, “whose authority there is none greater”, and is “the supreme judge of the faithful”. In the Catholic church, Jesus Christ doesn't amount to anything; the Pope is God, and if you do not believe that then you are lost forever.

In Rome, near the Vatican, is the church of 'Our Lady, the mother of grace.' In its porch is the inscription 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of Mary, that we may obtain mercy.' Not the throne of Christ but the throne of *Mary*. Christ has been dethroned and Mary has been given his place.

²² In other words, if you disagree with this doctrine then you are condemned to spend an eternity in Hell. It doesn't matter if you believe in Jesus or not; that one act of disagreement damns you to Hell forever. It is not enough to have faith in Christ and believe on His name; if you do not believe that the Pope is God then you are lost. The Catholic church gives the Pope powers and titles that only God possesses. They have overthrown God and put the Pope in His place.

In 1897 **Pope Leo XIII** issued a policy that said this:

“All versions of the vernacular, even by Catholics, are ***altogether prohibited***, unless approved by the Holy See, or published under the vigilant care of the Bishops, with annotations taken from the Fathers of the Church and learned Catholic writers” (Jacobus, *Roman Catholic and Protestant Bibles*, p. 237)

One might wonder: what was life like in Catholic countries at this time? This incident is said to have happened in Catholic-controlled Brazil:

“A traveler across Brazil in 1902, who inquired carefully into the subject, found in a thousand miles bishops and priests in plenty, ***but not a single copy of the Scriptures in any lay home***; nor had most of the residents ***ever heard*** of the Bible, though they were able, willing, and anxious to buy a copy when it was shown to them” (Jacobus, p. 235).

During 1902, public bonfires were made of Bibles in Austria, Fiji, Pernambuco, and Peru. The Archbishop of Sucre in Bolivia suggested that a man who was circulating copies of the Scriptures should be executed for it. Even though the 20th century had arrived, the Catholic church had not changed its attitude toward the Word of God. The only thing that stopped it from burning Bibles and executing Protestants was that it had lost its temporal power.

Persecutions During the 20th Century

As can be seen, from 400 AD to 1900 AD the Catholic church was unwavering in its opposition to the Bible and to those who believed that they were saved “by faith alone”. Pope Leo, the very first pope, declared that heretics should be executed, and in 1902 the Catholic church was still stating that those who distributed Bibles should be killed. In all those years nothing had changed. They had lost their power to murder Protestants and burn Bibles but, as can be seen by the statement of the Archbishop of Sucre in 1902, they had not lost their will – a satanic will that led to brutal and horrible deaths²³ for tens of millions of people. **No organization in the history of the world has persecuted Christians as long as the Roman Catholic Church.**²⁴ All of this stems from their belief that the Pope is God, that they alone are the only true church and the only way of salvation, and that all those who disagree with them should be converted by force – or executed.

The Catholic church has changed her tactics, **but she has changed none of her beliefs**²⁵. Today

²³ The Catholic church bragged during the Spanish Inquisition that people actually died of fright just at being asked to appear before the Inquisition.

²⁴ Has the Catholic church ever apologized for the 50 million people that it brutally murdered? Not as far as I have been able to find. In fact, the Catholic church has even stated that the Inquisition “wasn't actually that bad”. You can read Appendix A and decide this for yourself.

²⁵ The Vatican II council, held in the 1960's, reaffirmed the Council of Trent and various other Catholic doctrines. What Catholicism believed during the 15 centuries that it slaughtered Christians by the millions is still held as truth today. It still claims to be the one true church of Christ. It still claims to have authority to add its traditions and dogmas to the Word of God. It still claims sole authority to interpret the Word of God. It still claims to have an infallible Pope, who is

the Catholic church allows Bible ownership, but it supports the Critical Text – a corrupted version, based on a manuscript taken from the Vatican Library, that is full of errors and does not deserve to be called the Word of God.²⁶ Catholicism still teaches that the Pope can overrule the Bible by its decrees. If the Pope rules that Mary was sinless then that means she was sinless, no matter what the Bible has to say about it. Catholicism teaches that the Bible is subjected to the whims of the Pope.

The Catholic Church teaches that only the Pope can interpret the Bible (a stance it has held since it was founded, and one it has never wavered upon) and believes that the Bible should be interpreted in light of what Catholicism teaches. If the Bible says that all have sinned but the Pope says that Mary never sinned, then the Bible must mean that all have sinned except for Mary. This is not letting the Bible speak for itself, nor is it comparing all doctrines to the Word of God; this is forcing the Bible to support whatever the Pope wants.

In 1929 Pope Pius IX and Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty. This made the Roman Catholic Church the “sole religion” of Italy. The Italian government also paid to Rome 750 million lire in cash and 1 billion lire in state bonds. **The Roman Catholic Church, in return, used its authority to put Mussolini in power;** it required all Catholics to withdraw from participation in politics (many Catholics opposed the fascist Mussolini) and the Pope commanded Catholics to support Mussolini. Italian Catholics did so, which allowed Mussolini to be voted into power. The Cardinals in Rome hailed Mussolini as “that eminent statesmen [who rules Italy] by a decree of the Divine Providence.” Both parties benefited: the Catholic church became the official religion of Italy, and Mussolini's Fascist party assumed political power. With this newfound power, criticism of the Catholic church became a crime and religious education became mandatory.

In 1933 the Catholic church signed a concordant with Hitler. As a result of this concordant the Catholic church received hundreds of millions of dollars. In return Pope Pius IX never excommunicated Hitler, who was a Catholic²⁷, and never once protested the ongoing slaughter of 6 million Jews. The Catholic church persuaded German Catholics to back Hitler. Without their support it is unlikely that he would have been voted into power. Catholic leaders of the day spoke glowingly of Hitler and the Nazi movement. When Hitler came to power Cardinal Michael Faulhaber sent him this note of congratulations:

“What the old parliaments and parties failed to achieve in sixty years your broad statesman's vision has made a reality of world history in six months. This handclasp with the papacy, the greatest moral force in the history of the world, signifies a mighty deed full of immense blessing and an increase in German prestige East and West, in the sight of the entire world.” (Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, p. 257)

Pulitzer-prize-winning journalist John Toland said this:

the head of all churches. It still teaches that there is no salvation apart from the Catholic church.

²⁶ I have discussed this in more detail elsewhere. Basically, the Critical Text does not teach that the Bible is the Word of God; it teaches that the Bible has been lost and that all we can do is guess as to what it really said. It does not teach “Thus saith the Lord”. Instead it teaches “Some manuscripts say this, but we may change our minds if we discover another manuscript” - thus reducing the Bible to a pile of guesswork that cannot be trusted.

²⁷ It has often been said that Hitler was a Christian. That is not the case; Hitler was a Catholic. He was raised in a traditional Catholic family, regularly attended Mass, served as an altar boy, and attended school as a Benedictine monastery. Even after Hitler came to power he continued to attend Catholic worship services from time to time. Hitler himself insisted that he was a Catholic, and the Pope never disagreed with him.

“The Vatican was so appreciative of being recognized as a full partner that it asked God to bless the Reich. On a more practical level, it ordered German bishops to swear allegiance to the National Socialist regime. The new oath concluded with these significant words: 'In the performance of my spiritual office and in my solicitude for the welfare and the interest of the German Reich, I will endeavor to avoid all detrimental acts which might endanger it.'” (Toland, *Adolf Hitler*, pp. 431-32).

The Catholic church encouraged its members to vote for Hitler (even though at the time they knew who he was and his evil programs had already begun), and Catholics did so overwhelmingly. On Hitler's 50th birthday the Catholic church celebrated him and asked for God's blessing upon him. The Pope even personally congratulated him. When Hitler narrowly escaped assassination in 1939 the Catholic press in Germany almost unanimously declared it to be an act of special protection by God. Cardinal Faulhaber instructed that a special song be sang in Hitler's honor to thank God for his narrow escape. By this time Hitler had already invaded Poland, but rather than condemn him (something that never happened at any point while the Holocaust was going on) they congratulated him on his narrow brush with death. The Pope even encouraged all German Catholics to fight with Hitler!

Besides Hitler, Himmler was also a Catholic. He attended church regularly, took communion, confessed, and prayed. So was SS Colonel Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz. It is important to realize that, far from condemning the horrible atrocities that were going on in Nazi Germany, **the Catholic church actually helped bring them about**. The Pope did not condemn Hitler; he **encouraged** him and helped him rise to power. The Pope refused to command the Catholics serving in the German army (a quarter of the SS officers were Catholics) to stop helping Hitler, stating that he did not want to give them a crisis of conscience. In fact, after the war, **the Catholic church aided Nazi war criminals in escaping** from Germany to South America. Far from trying to bring these monsters to justice, the Vatican issued them passports and helped them escape from the Allied forces that were trying to hunt them down. All of this is well-documented.

Why would the Roman Catholic Church side with the Fascists? The Catholic church sees itself (even today) as the kingdom of God on Earth; it believes that it has the authority to rule over the nations, and it seeks the exercise political power – something that it has only recently lost. At the time it was clear that Communism was no friend of the Catholic church; its ruthless atheism was a severe threat. Yet, the capitalistic countries of the west were not an ally either; the Catholic church opposed the freedoms of conscience, religion, and of the press, and the Western democracies (all largely Protestant) held those freedoms dear. The only ally it saw was in Fascism – a group that was seemingly unstoppable at the time, and one that was more than willing to align with the Catholic church in exchange for support.

In Conclusion

There is a great deal more I could say about Catholic doctrine, or Catholic history, or even on the Catholic church today. The Catholic church is an evil, satanic organization that has never passed up a chance to persecute Christians. Its power to inflict damage has waned over the years, but it is just as evil as it has ever been and its intentions have not wavered.

For those who are interested in this subject, there are a great many good resources available. Entire books have been written about Catholic heresies and Catholic history. It is extremely clear that Catholicism is definitely *not* Christian. In fact, given all that it has done during the past 1500 years, it is impossible to name an organization that has exercised more pure evil over a longer period of time than the Catholic Church of Rome.

Appendix A: The Spanish Inquisition

[The following description of the tortures of the Catholic inquisition in Germany in the 16th century is from J. Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, Book 15, Chapter 11.]

Turn we now to the town of Nuremberg, in Bavaria. The zeal with which Duke Albert, the sovereign of Bavaria, entered into the restoration of Roman Catholicism, we have already narrated. To further the movement, he provided every one of the chief towns of his dominions with a Holy Office, and the Inquisition of Nuremberg still remains an anomalous and horrible monument in the midst of a city where the memorials of an exquisite art, and the creations of an unrivalled genius, meet one at every step. We shall first describe the Chamber of Torture.

The house so called immediately adjoins the Imperial Castle, which from its lofty site looks down on the city, whose Gothic towers, sculptured fronts, and curiously ornamented gables are seen covering both banks of the Pegnitz, which rolls below. The house may have been the guard-room of the castle. It derives its name, the Torture-chamber, not from the fact that the torture was here inflicted, but because into this one chamber has been collected a complete set of the instruments of torture gleaned from the various Inquisitions that formerly existed in Bavaria. A glance suffices to show the whole dreadful apparatus by which the adherents of Rome sought to maintain her dogmas. Placed next to the door, and greeting the sight as one enters, is a collection of hideous masks. These represent creatures monstrous of shape, and malignant and fiendish of nature, It is in beholding them that we begin to perceive how subtle was the genius that devised this system of coercion, and that it took the mind as well as the body of the victim into account. In gazing on them, one feels as if he had suddenly come into polluting and debasing society, and had sunk to the same moral level with the creatures here figured before him. He suffers a conscious abatement of dignity and fortitude. The persecutor had calculated, doubtless, that the effect produced upon the mind of his victim by these dreadful apparitions, would be that he would become morally relaxed, and less able to sustain his cause. Unless of strong mind, indeed, the unfortunate prisoner, on entering such a place, and seeing himself encompassed with such unearthly and hideous shapes, must have felt as if he were the vile heretic which the persecutor styled him, and as if already the infernal den had opened its portals, and sent forth its venomous swarms to bid him welcome. Yourself accursed, with accursed beings are you henceforth to dwell—such was the silent language of these abhorred images.

We pass on into the chamber, where more dreadful sights meet our gaze. It is hung round and round with instruments of torture, so numerous that it would take a long while even to name them, and so diverse that it would take a much longer time to describe them. We must take them in groups, for it were hopeless to think of going over them one by one, and particularising the mode in which each operated, and the ingenuity and art with which all of them have been adapted to their horrible end. There were instruments for compressing the fingers till the bones should be squeezed to splinters.

There were instruments for probing below the finger-nails till an exquisite pain, like a burning fire, would run along the nerves. There were instruments for tearing out the tongue, for scooping out the eyes, for grubbing-up the ears. There were bunches of iron cords, with a spiked circle at the end of every whip, for tearing the flesh from the back till bone and sinew were laid bare. There were iron cases for the legs, which were tightened upon the limb placed in them by means of a screw, till flesh and bone were reduced to a jelly. There were cradles set full of sharp spikes, in which victims were laid and rolled from side to side, the wretched occupant being pierced at each movement of the machine with innumerable sharp points. There were iron ladles with long handles, for holding molten lead or boiling pitch, to be poured down the throat of the victim, and convert his body into a burning cauldron. There were frames with holes to admit the hands and feet, so contrived that the person put into them had his body bent into unnatural and painful positions, and the agony grew greater and greater by moments, and yet the man did not die. There were chestfuls of small but most ingeniously constructed instruments for pinching, probing, or tearing the more sensitive parts of the body, and continuing the pain up to the very verge where reason or life gives way. On the floor and walls of the apartment were other and larger instruments for the same fearful end—lacerating, mangling, and agonizing living men; but these we shall meet in other dungeons we are yet to visit.

The first impression on entering the chamber was one of bewildering horror; a confused procession of mangled, mutilated, agonising men, speechless in their great woe, the flesh peeled from off their livid sinews, the sockets where eyes had been, hollow and empty, seemed to pass before one. The most dreadful scenes which the great genius of Dante has imagined, appeared tame in comparison with the spectral groups which this chamber summoned up. The first impulse was to escape, lest images of pain, memories of tormented men, who were made to die a hundred deaths in one, should take hold of one's mind, never again to be effaced from it.

The things we have been surveying are not the mere models of the instruments made use of in the Holy Office; they are the veritable instruments themselves. We see before us the actual implements by which hundreds and thousands of men and women, many of them saints and confessors of the Lord Jesus, were torn, and mangled, and slain. These terrible realities the men of the sixteenth century had to face and endure, or renounce the hope of the life eternal. Painful they were to flesh and blood—nay, not even endurable by flesh and blood unless sustained by the Spirit of the mighty God.

We leave the Torture-chamber to visit the Inquisition proper. We go eastward, about half a mile, keeping close to the northern wall of the city, till we come to an old tower, styled in the common parlance of Nuremberg the Max Tower. We pull the bell, the iron handle and chain of which are seen suspended beside the door-post. The cicerone appears, carrying a bunch of keys, a lantern, and some half-dozen candles. The lantern is to show us our way, and the candles are for the purpose of being lighted and stuck up at the turnings in the dark underground passages which we are about to traverse. Should mischance befall our lantern, these tapers, like beacon-lights in a narrow creek, will pilot us safely back into the day. The cicerone, selecting the largest from the bunch of keys, inserts it in the lock of the mossy portal before which we stand, bolt after bolt is turned, and the door, with hoarse heavy groan as it turns on its hinge, opens slowly to us. We begin to descend. We go down one flight of steps; we go down a second flight; we descend yet a third. And now we pause a moment. The darkness is intense, for here never came the faintest glimmer of day; but a gleam thrown forward from the lantern showed us that we were arrived at the entrance of a horizontal, narrow passage. We could see, by the flickering of the light upon its sides and roof, that the corridor we were traversing was hewn out of the rock. We had gone only a few paces when we were brought up before a mossy door. As far as the dim light served us, we could see the door, old, powdery with dust, and partly worm-eaten.

Passing in, the corridor continued, and we went forward other three paces or so, when we found ourselves before a second door. We opened and shut it behind us as we did the first. Again we began to

thread our way: a third door stopped us. We opened and closed it in like manner. Every step was carrying us deeper into the heart of the rock, and multiplying the barriers between us and the upper world. We were shut in with the thick darkness and the awful silence. We began to realize what must have been the feelings of some unhappy disciple of the Gospel, surprised by the familiars of the Holy Office, led through the midnight streets of Nuremberg, conducted to Max Tower, led down flight after flight of stairs, and along this horizontal shaft in the rock, and at every few paces a mossy door, with its locks and bolts, closing behind him! He must have felt how utterly he was beyond the reach of human pity and human aid. No cry, however piercing, could reach the ear of man through these roofs of rock.

He was entirely in the power of those who had brought him thither. At last we came to a side-door in the narrow passage. We halted, applied the key, and the door, with its ancient mold, creaking harshly as if moving on a hinge long disused, opened to let us in. We found ourselves in a rather roomy chamber, it might be about twelve feet square. This was the Chamber of Question. Along one side of the apartment ran a low platform. There sat of old the inquisitors, three in number—the first a divine, the second a casuist, and the third a civilian. The only occupant of that platform was the crucifix, or image of the Savior on the cross, which still remained. The six candles that usually burned before the "holy Fathers" were, of course, extinguished, but our lantern supplied their place, and showed us the grim furnishings of the apartment. In the middle was the horizontal rack or bed of torture, on which the victim was stretched till bone started from bone, and his dislocated frame became the seat of agony, which was suspended only when it had reached a pitch that threatened death.

Leaning against the wall of the chamber was the upright rack, which is simpler, but as an instrument of torture not less effectual, than the horizontal one. There was the iron chain which wound over a pulley, and hauled up the victim to the vaulted roof; and there were the two great stone weights which, tied to his feet, and the iron cord let go, brought him down with a jerk that dislocated his limbs, while the spiky rollers, which he grazed in his descent, cut into and excoriated his back, leaving his body a bloody, dislocated mass.

Here, too, was the cradle of which we have made mention above, amply garnished within with cruel knobs, on which the sufferer, tied hand and foot, was thrown at every movement of the machine, to be bruised all over, and brought forth discolored, swollen, bleeding, but still living. All round, ready to hand, were hung the minor instruments of torture. There were screws and thumbkins for the fingers, spiked collars for the neck, iron boots for the legs, gags for the mouth, cloths to cover the face, and permit the slow percolation of water, drop by drop, down the throat of the person undergoing this form of torture. There were rollers set round with spikes, for bruising the arms and back; there were iron scourges, pincers, and tongs for tearing out the tongue, slitting the nose and ears, and otherwise disfiguring and mangling the body till it was horrible and horrifying to look upon it. There were other things of which an expert only could tell the name and the use. Had these instruments a tongue, and could the history of this chamber be written, how awful the tale!

We shall suppose that all this has been gone through; that the confessor has been stretched on the bed of torture; has been gashed, broken, mangled, and yet, by power given him from above, has not denied his Savior: he has been "tortured not accepting deliverance:" what further punishment has the Holy Office in reserve for those from whom its torments have failed to extort a recantation? These dreadful dungeons furnish us with the means of answering this question.

We return to the narrow passage, and go forward a little way. Every few paces there comes a door, originally strong and mossy, and garnished with great iron knobs but now old and moldy, and creaking when opened with a noise painfully loud in the deep stillness. The windings are numerous, but at every turning of the passage a lighted candle is placed, lest peradventure the way should be missed, and the road back to the living world be lost for ever. A few steps are taken downwards, very cautiously, for a lantern can barely show the ground. Here there is a vaulted chamber, entirely dug out

of the living rock, except the roof, which is formed of hewn stone. It contains an iron image of the Virgin; and on the opposite wall, suspended by an iron hook, is a lamp, which when lighted shows the goodly proportions of "Our Lady." On the instant of touching a spring the image flings open its arms, which resemble the doors of a cupboard, and which are seen to be stuck full on the inside with poignards, each about a foot in length. Some of these knives are so placed as to enter the eyes of those whom the image enfolded in its embrace, others are set so as to penetrate the ears and brain, others to pierce the breast, and others again to gore the abdomen.

The person who had passed through the terrible ordeal of the Question-chamber, but had made no recantation, would be led along the tortuous passage by which we had come, and ushered into this vault, where the first object that would greet his eye, the pale light of the lamp falling on it, would be the iron Virgin. He would be bidden to stand right in front of the image. The spring would be touched by the executioner ÷ the Virgin would fling open her arms, and the wretched victim would straightway be forced within them. Another spring was then touched ÷ the Virgin closed upon her victim; a strong wooden beam, fastened at one end to the wall by a movable joint, the other placed against the doors of the iron image, was worked by a screw, and as the beam was pushed out, the spiky arms of the Virgin slowly but irresistibly closed upon the man, cruelly goring him. When the dreadful business was ended, it needed not that the executioner should put himself to the trouble of making the Virgin unclasp the mangled carcass of her victim; provision had been made for its quick and secret disposal. At the touching of a third spring, the floor of the image would slide aside, and the body of the victim drop down the mouth of a perpendicular shaft in the rock. We look down this pit, and can see, at a great depth, the shimmer of water. A canal had been made to flow underneath the vault where stood the iron Virgin, and when she had done her work upon those who were delivered over to her tender mercies, she let them fall, with quick descent and sullen plunge, into the canal underneath, where they were floated to the Pegnitz, and from the Pegnitz to the Rhine, and by the Rhine to the ocean, there to sleep beside the dust of Huss and Jerome.

INCORRUPTIBLE CROWNS

Throughout the New Testament the Bible speaks of three different types of crowns. These crowns are given after death as a reward for a life well-lived. They are the crown of **righteousness**, the crown of **life**, and the crown of **glory**. These crowns are not crowns of authority, but are actually *prizes*. This is how my Greek Lexicon defines the word:

Crown (4735): A badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor generally. “In classic Greek not used of the kingly crown but of the crown of victory in games, of civic worth, military valor, nuptial joy, festal gladness. Woven of oak, ivy, myrtle, olive leaves or flowers. Used as a wreath of the garland. Contrast diadema (1238), diadem, a white linen band encircling the brow to indicate the assumption of royal dignity.”

The crowns in the ancient world were temporary things that quickly passed away. After all, a crown of leaves or flowers would not last very long. However, the crowns the Bible speaks of are much more permanent. The apostle Paul says that we are striving to obtain *incorruptible* crowns:

I Corinthians 9:24: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

Notice how Paul explains that the prize we are racing for is something that can be lost. The Bible says that we cannot lose our salvation, so that is not what Paul had in mind. These crowns are something else – they are something that we have to work to obtain, lest we wind up short and become “castaways”. If we want these crowns then we are going to have to earn them.

There are many people who believe that they can live however they please because “We’re all going to go to Heaven anyway, so it doesn’t really matter.” That attitude is completely wrong. In this passage Paul tells us that it really *does* matter. There is a very real danger that if we do not live well we will lose something precious. We have to race well if we want to win the prize. If we do not then we will not be awarded anything. Paul put a great deal of effort into winning this prize; he says that he fought hard and brought his body under subjection so that he would win. These incorruptible crowns are worth striving and sacrificing for. These crowns are not meaningless trinkets; they have great value.

The Bible speaks of three different types of incorruptible crowns. The first one is the **crown of righteousness**:

2 Timothy 4:7: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also

that love his appearing.”

This crown will be given to all those who long for the return of Jesus Christ and who are excited about His return. These people don't dread the prospect of Jesus coming back, but instead long for it with great hope and anticipation.

Let me point out that the prize here is the *crown* of righteousness, not righteousness itself. Righteousness is not something we can earn. The only way we can obtain it is through the Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us His righteousness when we are saved. However, the crown of righteousness is different. In order to get it you have to earn it, and the way you earn it is by longing for the return of Christ.

It's worth noting that the crown of righteousness is *not* the prize for leading a holy life. Instead it is given to those who long for Jesus to come back. All those who are saved and who long for His return will be given this crown. All those who are indifferent, or who hate the idea of His return, or who hope He will stay away so that His return does not interfere with their plans, will not receive it.

James speaks of another type of crown – the **crown of life**:

James 1:12: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

This crown is given to those who *endure temptation*. You see, Christ wants us to love Him, and the way we show our love for Him is by keeping His commandments. Those who keep His commandments prove that they really do love Him; their love is not just in words, but is in actions as well. Those who endure temptation and defeat it, choosing to walk in the ways of God instead of the ways of the flesh, will be given the crown of life.

This passage is *not* talking about eternal life itself, because that is something that God freely gives to us after we are saved. We cannot earn it and we cannot lose it. The only way to obtain eternal life is by faith in Jesus Christ, and those who believe on Him will live forever (John 11:26). James is *not* saying that if we give in to temptation we will be condemned to Hell regardless of whether we are Christians or not. This crown is something different; it is a reward for those who have endured trials and lived a holy life. Some Christians will receive this and some will not.

Christ Himself speaks of this crown in Revelation:

Revelation 2:10: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Once again note that Christ promises the crown to those who are faithful unto *death*. He did not say “Your faithfulness does not matter because you get it either way”. Our salvation and the promise of eternal life *does not rest on our faithfulness*; instead it rests on the faithfulness of Christ. The crown of life, however, is different. Those who are faithful unto death will receive it, and those who were faithless will not.

Peter speaks of the third type of crown – the **crown of glory**:

I Peter 5:1: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.
4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

This crown is promised to those who faithfully and selflessly take care of the Church. It will be given to pastors, evangelists, and elders that executed their job faithfully. Those who did well will be given the crown of glory, and those who were faithless will lose it.

As I have said before, these crowns *can* be lost. There are requirements attached to them, and success is not guaranteed. Some people will gain them and others will not. Jesus Himself warns us to be careful lest we lose our crowns:

Revelation 3:11: “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

Our *salvation* cannot be lost and *eternal life* cannot be lost, so Christ is clearly not talking about either of those. What *can* be lost are our crowns, because they are rewards for a life well lived. If we dread the return of Christ then we will not be given the crown of righteousness. If we live selfish, carnal lives then we will never receive the crown of life. Finally, if we are pastors that choose to side with the world instead of the Bible then we will never receive the crown of glory.

Incidentally, the last time that these crowns are mentioned in Scripture is in the book of Revelation. Take a look at what people are doing with their crowns:

Revelation 4:10: “The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

The reason people are casting their crowns before God is so that they might honor Him with them. They are taking their glory and honor and giving it to the Lord. Why? Because God alone is worthy. God, after all, is the one who gave them the grace they needed to endure temptation and live faithfully. In the end, even our rewards are used to bring glory and honor to the Living God.

Incidentally, this is yet more evidence that the crowns are real, physical crowns and not just something symbolic or “spiritual”. After all, how can you cast a “spiritual” crown at the feet of Christ?

PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

Within the Church today there is a great deal of debate regarding the subject of end-times prophecy. There are some people who believe that prophecy should be ignored entirely. There are others who believe that prophecy is largely symbolic, and is not intended to be taken in a literal way. There are others, though, who think that prophecy should *not* be “spiritualized”. They think that it means what it says and we should take the subject seriously.

This topic is far too vast to be covered in a single paper. In other places I have already discussed why prophecy should be studied, why preterism is false, why amillennialism is an error, and why covenant theology (also known as replacement theology) is wrong. Because of that I am going to focus on just one thing in this paper, and that is the subject of the Rapture.

Today the idea of the Rapture is widely ridiculed. People simply don't believe in it anymore, which is a great tragedy. However, I *do* believe in it. I think that one day, before the Tribulation begins, the Lord will return to Earth and take His Church back to Heaven. This is *not* the same thing as the Second Coming, which happens *after* the Tribulation. The Rapture is a separate event, and is the time when when we will all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. I believe this happens before Israel signs the seven-year covenant with the Antichrist.

There are a number of reasons why I believe this, but let's start at the beginning. After the Last Supper took place and Judas left to betray Jesus, the Lord told His disciples that He was about to leave them. He told them not to be afraid, though, because He had a reason for leaving them:

John 14:1: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.
I go to prepare a place for you.
3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

In other words, Jesus was going away so He could prepare a place for His disciples. Once He finished He would come back and get them so that they could be with Him forever.

In ancient Jewish courtships, after the bride and groom were engaged the groom would leave his bride-to-be and go prepare a home for the two of them to live in. After he completed it he would return for his bride and they would be married. Jesus is doing the same thing for us. It is not for nothing that the Church is called the Bride of Christ.

In verse 28 Jesus tells us where He is going:

John 14:28: “Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.”

Jesus is going to His father, and one day He will come back and get the Church. Nothing more is said at this point. This is all very straightforward: Jesus left us to prepare a home for us, and one day He will come back and get us. There is nothing complicated about this.

The next passage of interest is found in I Thessalonians:

I Thessalonians 4:13: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

This passage goes into more detail about the time when Jesus will return for His Church. Without repeating everything the passage says, those of the Church who died before the Lord returns will be raised from the dead – their bodies will be brought back to life. (That, after all, is what “resurrection” means. In order to have a resurrection you must first have something that died, and it then has to come back to life. When we die the only part of us that stops living is our bodies. *That* is what gets raised from the dead when Jesus returns.) After the dead saints have been resurrected, the living saints will be transformed. In an instant they will become immortals, and all that is sinful or unclean about them will be banished forever. Next, everyone will meet Christ in the air, after which we will “ever be with the Lord”.

So here we have a picture of what it will be like when Jesus returns for the Church. There will be a resurrection of the dead, a putting on of immortality, and a grand meeting in the air. After this has happened we will “ever be with the Lord”. This passage adds a lot of detail to Christ's return, but it doesn't give us any information about its timing. When does this happen in relation to other end-times events? Based on this passage alone we cannot say, but there are other verses that provide some context for the Rapture.

Incidentally, the word “rapture” comes from verse 17. The phrase “caught up” in Latin is very similar to the word “rapture”. For centuries the only version of the Bible that was available was the Latin version, and that is where this word came from. When people speak of the Rapture they are merely speaking of the time when the Church will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air. (This is why it is unfair to say that the word “rapture” never appears in the Bible. It actually does appear in *Latin* Bibles because it's a Latin word.)

There really should be no debate among Christians about whether or not there will be a Rapture. The Bible is quite clear that one day we will be “caught up” (or “raptured”) to meet our Lord in the air. The only real question is one of timing – when does this happen? Is this the same thing as the Second Coming that is spoken of in Matthew 24 (which happens after the Tribulation), or is this something separate?

The next passage can be found in I Corinthians:

I Corinthians 15:50: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on

immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

This passage also speaks of the resurrection. Those who have believed in Jesus but died before His return will be raised from the dead (meaning, as we said earlier, that their dead bodies will be raised back to life). Next, those who are still alive will be transformed; the mortal will put on immortality and we will be changed. (Some more details about this can be found in the preceding verses, I Corinthians 15:35-49). These teachings are quite clear and are not tied to any particular interpretation of end-times. The verses simply teach that one day the Lord will return and get His church and they will be forever with Him. However, this still does not answer our question: just when does this occur? Does this happen before, during, or after the Tribulation?

First, it should be noted that the Church began on the day of Pentecost and will be completed at the Rapture. Before Pentecost there were Old Testament saints, but none of them were a part of the Church. If you will recall, John the Baptist referred to himself as a friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29); he did not consider himself to be a part of the Bride. John was beheaded long before the day of Pentecost occurred, so although he was saved he was not a part of the Church. The word “church” never appears in the Old Testament, and the reason for this is because the church is a new concept that began after the death of Christ, and not before. There was no such thing as the Church before the day of Pentecost.

As was explained earlier, when the Lord returns at the Rapture He will gather the Church to Himself and the Church will then be gone. Since the Church is being taken to Heaven, they will obviously no longer be on the Earth. It is worth noting that the Church appears in Revelation 1-3, which takes place *before* the Tribulation, but there is no mention of the Church being on Earth in Revelation 6-18, which takes place *during* the Tribulation. There are saints mentioned in chapters 6-18 but they are never referred to as the Church (just as the saints in the Old Testament are never referred to as the Church). *Nowhere* does the Bible speak of the Church going through the Tribulation.

This, however, is not the strongest evidence that the Rapture takes place before the Tribulation. In Luke 21 Jesus says this:

Luke 21:34: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

This passage is one of the strongest evidences for placing the Rapture before the Tribulation. The Lord said that the Tribulation will be a snare to *all* those who dwell on the *whole Earth*. In other

words, *everyone who is on Earth will be forced to suffer through it*. However, the Lord tells us to watch and pray so that we can escape this time of suffering that will afflict *everyone on the entire planet*. If it afflicts everyone on the planet with no exceptions, then the only way to escape it is to not be on the planet. If we should pray so we can escape it, then we must be praying that the Lord will come and get us before it happens! This strongly implies that the Rapture will occur prior to the Tribulation and remove the Church from Earth so that we can escape it.

Some people get upset at Christians who teach a pre-Tribulation Rapture and accuse them of being easy-living Christians who just don't want to suffer or get their hands dirty for Christ. It's worth noting that Jesus *commands* His disciples to pray that we won't go through this period. He *did not want His children to endure it*. Praying to escape the Tribulation is not evidence of a weak will; it is *obedience* to the command of Christ.

There are others who say that “watch and pray” means that only the “worthy” will escape the Tribulation, and all backslid Christians will have to endure it. That is not what Jesus is talking about. The Lord is not going to leave part of His Bride behind for *any* reason. When the Church is complete *all* of it will be brought home. What Jesus is talking about are people who think they are saved but are not. Jesus spent a lot of time warning people to examine themselves to see if they were in the faith. All of those who are saved will be in the Rapture, but not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” is among the saved. That is the point.

I Thessalonians expands upon this idea of a pre-Tribulation Rapture:

I Thessalonians 5:1: “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and **they shall not escape**.

4 But **ye**, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

First of all, it's important to note that Paul is talking about the “day of the Lord” (verse 2), which is *not* Judgment Day. The “day of the Lord” is a phrase used throughout Scripture that refers to the Tribulation. (Many Old Testament passages talk about the Tribulation, but that is outside the scope of this discussion.) Paul is warning the Thessalonian church that the Tribulation will catch the lost world by surprise and they will not escape. However, Paul goes on to say that the Church is not in

darkness and will *not* be surprised. While the world will be caught up in the Tribulation, the Church will not because *it was not appointed to wrath*. In this context the word “wrath” is not referring to Judgment Day (since that is not what's being discussed!) but is instead the wrath that God will pour out upon the world during the Tribulation. The world will have to endure that terrible period of time, but the Church will be spared.

In verse 9 Paul mentions the “hope of salvation”. This is not salvation from our sins – after all, that is *not* a hope. Christ has already forgiven our sins and paid our debt with His own blood. Besides, Paul is not discussing salvation from our sins. The “hope of salvation” is salvation from the wrath that is mentioned in the first verses of this chapter – *the wrath of the Tribulation*. This passage provides clear, direct evidence that God has not appointed His Church to suffer through the wrath of the Tribulation. Instead He will deliver us from it – and since the Tribulation will afflict *everyone* on the *whole Earth*, He must be planning to take His Church *out* of the Earth before the Tribulation begins. Since the Marriage of the Lamb takes place in Heaven *before* the Tribulation ends (see Revelation 19:7), that is even more evidence that the Church must be in Heaven during the Tribulation. Since the Rapture is what moves the Church to Heaven, the Rapture must happen before the Tribulation.

Another mention of this same idea can be found in Revelation 3:10:

Revelation 3:10: “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

In this passage, the Tribulation is the hour of trial that will try everyone that dwells upon the Earth. Notice that this passage does not say that the Church will be kept *safe* during this hour of trial, but that *it will be kept from the hour of trial altogether*. Given that the verse goes out of its way to explain that the Tribulation impacts *all the world* to afflict *everyone that lives on the Earth*, this is more evidence that the Church will not be on the Earth when the Tribulation happens.

Some have said “Oh, that just means the Church will be protected from persecution during that period”. If you read the rest of Revelation you will see for yourself how ludicrous that statement is – God gives the beast the power to make war with the saints and overcome them (Revelation 13:7), and the beast kills *millions* of believers. There is no possible way that “being kept safe” is the same thing as “the antichrist will hunt down all of you and behead you”. The *Church* is kept safe because it's not on the Earth anymore and so it is out of the antichrist's reach. However, all those who come to Christ after the Rapture are not a part of the Church and are not kept safe. Many millions of them will be hunted down and brutally murdered.

How close are we to the Rapture? Well, the Bible teaches that the Rapture can happen at any moment. For example:

Romans 13:11: “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”

The salvation mentioned in this verse cannot be referring to salvation from sins, because that was finished when Christ died in the cross. Salvation from sins is *not* something that we are still looking forward to in the future. Paul is speaking of salvation from the Tribulation and being saved from the hour of wrath that will come upon the whole Earth. *That* salvation is “nearer than when we

believed". The imagery in these two verses depicts something that is drawing closer and is near at hand. You can almost hear Paul saying "It won't be long now". Nowhere does he say that it's a long way off or that other things must happen first. It can literally happen at any moment. There are no other signs or events that must take place before the Rapture happens.

James 5 also speaks of this:

James 5:7: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door."

Like Paul, James says that the coming of the Lord is drawing near and he urges us to be patient until Jesus comes. James goes so far as to say that "the Judge standeth before the door". If He is standing at the door then He is very near indeed! Revelation also makes this same point:

Revelation 22:20: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Even Jesus says that He is coming quickly! This can only be true if the Rapture happens before the Tribulation. If the Rapture happens in the middle of the Tribulation then it is always at least 3.5 years away. If it happens at the end of the Tribulation then it's at least 7 years away. In neither case is the Rapture imminent. It is only imminent if it occurs *before* the Tribulation.

The Bible does not say exactly when the Rapture will happen. What it does say is that the coming of the Lord is drawing near and we should be sober and watch for it. Amen!

FESTIVALS AND HOLY DAYS

In the Mosaic Law God gave the Israelites a calendar that was filled with festivals and holy days. The holy day that we are most familiar with is the Sabbath, but there are quite a few others as well. I think it's unfortunate that so many Christians are unfamiliar with most of these festivals. These holy days are not just trivia: they point to Christ's ministry *and* have prophetic significance.

We can find a detailed list of these festivals in Leviticus 23:

Leviticus 23:1: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts."

The chapter goes on to list the various festivals. They are:

- **The Sabbath (1 day):** this occurred on the seventh day of each week; it was a holy day of rest (Lev. 23:1-3). This is the holy day that we are most familiar with.
- **The Passover (1 day):** this occurred on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish year. It was to remind Israel that God delivered them from bondage in Egypt (Lev. 23:4-5).
- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread (7 days):** this was a week-long event that started on the day after the Passover. This was to remind God's people of their deliverance from bondage into a new, holy life (Lev. 23:6-8).
- **The Firstfruits (1 day):** this occurred on the day after the Sabbath that followed the Passover (which meant it always took place on a Sunday). It was a demonstration that the first and best of everything belonged to God (Lev. 23:9-14). This began the day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- **The Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) (1 day):** this occurred seven weeks (50 days) after the Festival of Firstfruits. In this holy day a priest would wave two loaves (which had been baked with leaven) before the Lord. (Lev. 23:15-21).
- **The Trumpets (1 day):** this occurred on the first day of the seventh month. This was a day of rest and burnt offerings, and it symbolized new beginnings (Lev. 23:23-25). A gap of 4 months separated Pentecost from Trumpets.
- **The Day of Atonement (1 day):** this occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month. This was a day of rest, in which people cried out to the Lord for forgiveness (Lev. 23:28-32). This is the day when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and made atonement for the sins of the people.
- **The Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Booths) (7 days):** this was a week-long event that began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. This reminded Israel of the ways God had blessed them in the past (Lev. 33-44).

These festivals give us an amazing overview of God's plan for history. Some people have called these festivals God's prophetic calendar.

Before we begin a detailed look at each holy day, however, there is an important question that

we need to answer. When the Church Age began there were some people who wondered if Christians were still bound by the old levitical law. Was the Church supposed to keep all of these festivals?

That question was answered by the apostle Paul in two different places:

Colossians 2:16: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:
17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

Romans 14:5: “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.
6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”

The lesson in these verses is clear. In the Old Testament the Israelites were under the Mosaic Law, and therefore they were required to observe these feasts (along with all of the other provisions that were contained within the law). After the death of Jesus, however, the Old Testament was supplanted by the New Testament. We are no longer under the Mosaic Law; instead we are under grace. Christians are not required to observe these festivals. Instead we have the freedom to do as we think best; we can observe them or we can ignore them. The Bible commands Christians to not judge each other concerning this matter. Those who keep them are not better than those who don't (and vice versa).

There is not enough time to explore each of the feasts in detail, so I will only cover them briefly. I hope this will give you a better understanding of the marvelous calendar that God gave to the Israelites.

The Sabbath

The first holy day that is mentioned in Leviticus 23 is the Sabbath. It was to be held on the seventh day of every week:

Leviticus 23:3: “Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, a holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.”

The Lord set apart the seventh day of the week (which is our Saturday) to be a holy day of rest. No work was allowed to be done on the Sabbath *on pain of death*. In Numbers 15:32-36 we are told that a man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. When he was brought to the Lord for sentencing God commanded that he be stoned to death. This was done in obedience to this commandment:

Exodus 30:14: “Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.”

Twice in two verses the Lord commanded that anyone who violated the Sabbath was to be put to death. The Lord did not accept violations of the Sabbath (although as Christ pointed out, showing love and kindness was not a violation), and God often used His prophets to rebuke Israel for the many ways they violated this command.

The Lord gave several reasons for this holy day. First, when the Lord created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, He made the seventh day holy:

Exodus 20:11: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

We are also told that the seventh day of the week was set aside so that mankind might be refreshed from their labors:

Exodus 23:12: “Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.”

Finally, the Sabbath was set aside to remind the nation of Israel of their special relationship with God:

Exodus 23:13: “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.”

Besides the Sabbath day, the Lord also appointed Sabbath years and the Year of Jubilee. Every seventh year was to be a year of rest. In that year the Israelites were not allowed to sow crops; instead the land was to lie dormant in order to give it a chance to rest. The Lord promised to provide an abundant harvest on the year before the Sabbath year so that famine would not ensue. Likewise, every fiftieth year was the Year of Jubilee; the land was also to lie rest on that year, and all debts were canceled. Since the Year of Jubilee always followed a Sabbath year, the Lord promised to provide an abundant harvest before these two years of rest.

The Sabbath is one of the festivals that have not yet been fulfilled. We know this because the book of Hebrews expounds upon it:

Hebrews 4:4: “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

For now, in this life, we labor and work for God. A day is coming, though, when we will finally cease from our labors and enter into God's rest. The people of God have struggled for a long time, but one day Christ will return for us. When that day comes the Church will finally rest from its labors. Our Sabbath day of rest is approaching; every day it draws nearer.

As a side-note, it's worth noting that God clearly states that He created the world in *six days*. The word that is translated “day” in Exodus 20 is exact the same word that is used in Genesis 1. God could not have made it any plainer that everything was created in six ordinary days – after all, the Lord commanded the Israelites to rest on the seventh day just as He did! Those who would claim that the days lasted millions of years turn Exodus 20:11 into nonsense. Are people supposed to work for untold millions of years and then rest for millions of years? If God had wanted to say that the world came into being through millions of years of evolution He certainly could have done so – but He did not.

The Passover

The second holy day that is on the calendar is the Passover. It was to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish year:

Leviticus 23:5: “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover.”

The festival began in the evening. Jewish days always began in the evening and then continued until the next afternoon. This followed the pattern that God established in Genesis 1: a day consisted of an evening and a morning.

The first time that Israel celebrated the Passover was when they were still in bondage in Egypt:

Exodus 12:2: “And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: ...

5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:

6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole

assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance [internal organs] thereof.

10 And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.”

The Passover was to be celebrated at the beginning of every Jewish year, and it served as a reminder of Israel's great deliverance from Egypt. The last plague that God sent to Egypt was the angel of death, who was sent to kill the firstborn of every living creature. In order to be saved from the angel of death the Jews had to be covered by the blood of a perfect lamb. All of the firstborn who were not protected by the blood were killed by the death angel. This is a striking parallel to Christ, who was called “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The Lord is even called “Christ our passover” in 1 Corinthians 5:7, which makes the parallel even clearer.

The Jews celebrated the first passover by killing the perfect male lamb in the evening. After they painted the doorposts of their house with blood, they were to roast the lamb (with its internal organs) with fire, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Nothing was allowed to remain until the next morning; if there were any leftovers they had to be burned.

The Passover looked forward to the coming Lamb of God – the Messiah who would die for our sins. As you might suspect, Jesus was actually crucified *on the day of the Passover*. The Passover festival was fulfilled by Jesus Christ when He died on the cross; He fulfilled it by personally becoming the sacrificial Lamb.

The blood of Christ is the only thing that can deliver us from death. We must be washed in His blood:

John 6:53: “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise Him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in Him.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so He that eateth me, even He shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.”

No outsiders were allowed to eat of the Passover; only those who were born into the family (or purchased) could eat it. Likewise, no one who is not in the family of God can partake of Christ.

I think this quote puts it well:

“The firstborn Jews in Egypt weren't saved from death by admiring the lamb, caring for the lamb, or loving the lamb. The lamb had to be slain, and the blood applied to the doorpost of each Jewish house. We aren't saved by Christ the Example or Christ

the Teacher. We're saved by Christ the Substitute, who gave His life in our stead on the cross at the same hour the Passover lambs were being slain at the Jewish temple in Jerusalem." (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, pg. 103-104)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a seven-day event that began the day after Passover. It is explained in this passage:

Leviticus 23:6-8: "And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

7 In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days: in the seventh day is a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein."

This was celebrated when the Israelites were still in Egypt:

Exodus 12:15: "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

16 And in the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

17 And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever.

18 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

19 Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

20 Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread."

The feast could be summed up as follows:

- The feast lasted 7 days, during which they were to eat unleavened bread each day.
- The first and last day of the feast were holy days, and no work could be done on them.
- The Israelites were to completely remove all leaven (which was symbolic of sin) from their homes.
- No one could eat anything with leaven in it during the feast. The punishment for breaking this was severe.

- “Offerings made by fire” were to be made during those seven days.
- The Israelites were to observe it as a reminder of the day the Lord delivered them from Egypt.

There are two important points that we need to understand in order to make sense of this feast. First of all, leaven is symbolic of sin. Second, Jesus referred to Himself as the Bread of Life:

John 6:33: "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

John 6:50: "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Since Jesus was without sin, and since Jesus is the Bread of Life, that makes Him *unleavened bread*. In this festival God commanded Israel to partake of unleavened bread – and Jesus commands us to partake of Him. This festival began the day after after the Passover, which means it took place the day after the lamb had been sacrificed. Just as Christ fulfilled the Passover by becoming the sacrificial lamb, Christ fulfilled this festival by *being* the unleavened bread. God commands us to partake of Him and remove the sin (which is what leaven is symbolic of) from our lives.

This is how the apostle Paul put it:

1 Corinthians 5:6: “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

The Festival of Firstfruits

The Festival of the Firstfruits fell on the day after the Sabbath that followed the Passover. Since the Sabbath fell on a Saturday, that meant that this festival would always occur on a Sunday. The festival is described in this passage:

Leviticus 23:9: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

12 And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish

of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord.

13 And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin.

14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.”

In this festival the Jews were to bring a portion of the firstfruits of their crops to the Lord as an offering. The priest would take this portion and wave it before the Lord. They would then offer a male lamb, without blemish, as a burnt offering. The offering was also to be accompanied by a meat offering and a drink offering. (Note that these offerings were offerings of *dedication*, not offerings for sin.)

The Israelites were not allowed to eat “bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears” until they brought the firstfruits and offered it to the Lord. The Lord claimed the firstfruits of their crops as His own, and this was day they were required to offer it. Although the entire creation belongs to God, the Lord only required the firstfruits and left the rest to the nation of Israel. The firstfruits were offered on behalf of the entire harvest.

The key to understanding this festival is to realize that Christ rose from the dead on the very day that this festival was being celebrated. That was not a coincidence. The Bible identifies Christ as the **firstfruit of the dead**:

1 Corinthians 15:20: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.”

This festival looked forward to the resurrection. Although there were other people in the Bible who were raised from the dead, they were not raised incorruptible and immortal and they eventually died again. Christ's resurrection, however, was different: He was raised in a new and more glorious body. Since Jesus was the first person to be resurrected, He was the firstfruits. So far He is the only person who has been resurrected, but one day the rest of the harvest will follow. Verse 23 tells us that when Christ returns the righteous dead will be resurrected and the living will be translated.

Christ fulfilled the Passover by becoming the sacrificial lamb, and He fulfilled the Festival of Unleavened Bread by becoming the Bread of Life. Christ fulfilled this festival by raising from the dead and becoming the firstfruits of the dead.

Pentecost

The festival of Pentecost (which was also known as the Feast of Weeks) was a one-day holy day that took place 50 days after the Festival of Firstfruits. It is described in these verses:

Leviticus 23:15: “And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath,

from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:

16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord.

17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the Lord.

18 And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto the Lord, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savor unto the Lord.

19 Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.

20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the Lord for the priest.

21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be a holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.”

As the passage explains, the festival of Pentecost took place fifty days after the festival of firstfruits. It was a one-day event, and no work could be done on the day of Pentecost. The event involved a number of different sacrifices:

- A series of burnt offerings that consisted of seven lambs, one young bullock, and two rams. Burnt offerings were offerings of dedication.
- A goat as a sin offering. Sin offerings were offerings of reconciliation for sin against God.
- Two lambs for peace offerings. Peace offerings dealt with thanksgiving and fellowship with God.

At the heart of this festival were the two wave loaves. These loaves were made of fine flour and were baked with yeast. This is very unusual, as the other festivals (such as Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread) forbade the use of yeast. In the Scriptures yeast always represents sin, and yet yeast was baked into these two loaves. The priest was to take these two loaves and wave them before the Lord.

The reason we are so familiar with the word Pentecost is because that is the day the Church was born:

Acts 2:1: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other

tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

On that day the Holy Spirit came and united the Jews and the Gentiles (two very different groups) into one body. There was no longer Jew or Gentile, for all were one in Christ. The two loaves had been joined into one.

These loaves, however, have not yet been made perfect. Just as there was leaven in the loaves, so there is sin in the Church. When the Lord returns He will make us immortal and incorruptible, but that day has not yet come. For now we still have to deal with the sin that works throughout the body.

One of the key aspects of leaven is that it makes bread rise. Leaven doesn't actually make more bread, though; it just makes the bread appear to be larger than it really is. Likewise, sin has made the Church appear much larger than it really is. There are many people in our midst who claim to be Christians but are not. These people will be separated out when the Lord returns and will be left behind.

One other thing: right after this festival is described there are two verses that seem very out of place:

Leviticus 23:22: “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the Lord your God.”

Why was this commandment put right in the middle of a discussion of festivals and holy days? Well, it's interesting to note that because of this commandment, Ruth was able to find food to feed herself and her mother-in-law. This led to her relationship with Boaz, who was an ancestor of King David, who was an ancestor of Jesus Christ – the one who made all of these festivals possible.

As we have seen, Christ fulfilled the Passover by becoming the sacrificial lamb. He fulfilled the Festival of Unleavened Bread by becoming the Bread of Life. He fulfilled the Festival of Firstfruits by rising from the dead. The Holy Spirit fulfilled Pentecost by joining both Jew and Gentile into the body of Christ. All of these festivals take place in the spring, and all of them have been fulfilled.

There are still three festivals left. All of them occur in the fall, and all of them remain unfulfilled. They are prophetic, and look forward to events that have not yet occurred.

The Festival of Trumpets

After Pentecost there is a gap of four months before the next festival – but the three remaining festivals all occur within 15 days. The next holy day is the Festival of Trumpets, which was held on the first day of the seventh month. It is described in this passage:

Leviticus 23:23: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.

25 Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.”

This was a one-day festival, and no work was allowed on that day. It was a day of rest and sacrifices – a day that was signified by the blowing of trumpets.

The sacrifices for this festival are described in this passage:

Numbers 29:1: “And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: **it is a day of blowing the trumpets** unto you.

2 And ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet savor unto the Lord; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year without blemish:

3 And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram,

4 And one tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs:

5 And one kid of the goats for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you:”

As was mentioned before, burnt offerings and meat offerings were offerings of dedication and *commitment*, not offerings for sin. They were a way of saying “I am fully dedicating my life to serving God.”

It is very important to note that this day was signified by blowing trumpets. There were three times when priests were allowed to blow trumpets, and they are listed in Numbers 10:1-10. Priests could blow their trumpets to call the people together, to announce war, or to announce special times (such as the new moon). This festival falls into the third category.

The Festival of Trumpets was held on the first day of the seventh month, and it ushered in the new civil year (“Rosh Hashanah”). Since it started the new civil year, it marked a new beginning for the Israelites. As Christians we are also waiting for a new beginning, which will be marked by the blowing of a trumpet:

1 Corinthians 15:51: “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

As we can see, the fulfillment of this festival is still in the future. One day the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised, and we will begin a new existence. This festival looks forward to the Rapture, and one day Christ will fulfill it by returning for us.

There are some people who have speculated that since the other festivals were fulfilled on the day of that festival, the Festival of Trumpets will likewise be fulfilled on Rosh Hashanah. Unfortunately, the Scriptures do not support this. The reason this festival takes place on the first day of the Jewish civil year is to commemorate the fact that a new year has begun; it is not pointing to a

specific date in history. The Rapture can occur on any day and at any time; it is not limited to occurring on just one day of the year. Whenever it happens it will mark the beginning of a new life for us – just as Rosh Hashanah marked the beginning of a new civil year for Israel.

The Day of Atonement

This feast was a one-day event that occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month (which is nine days after the Festival of Trumpets). It is explained in this passage:

Leviticus 23:27: “Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

28 And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God.

29 For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.

30 And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.

31 Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

32 It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”

The day of atonement is a day that is set aside for fasting, praying, and confessing the sin of the people. On that day the congregation was to do no work; their entire focus was to be on “afflicting your souls” and crying out to God for forgiveness. No work was allowed on that day (perhaps because one's works cannot bring atonement). On this day the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies in the Temple and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat, to make atonement for the sins of the people.

I believe that this festival has yet to be fulfilled, and that it speaks of the day when the Jews will finally accept Jesus as their Messiah. This is spoken of in the book of Zechariah:

Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon.”

At the end of the Tribulation the Jews will realize that they have rejected their Messiah and will turn to God with great sorrow and repentance. At that point all Israel will be saved (which is what Paul prophesied in Romans 11).

The Feast of Tabernacles

This feast, also known as the “Feast of Booths”, occurred on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (which is five days after the Day of Atonement). This festival was a week-long event that dealt not with affliction but with joy:

Leviticus 23:34: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord.

35 On the first day shall be a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: on the eighth day shall be a holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. ...

39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.

40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

43 That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

In this feast the Israelites were to take branches from trees, build booths (or tents), and live in them for seven days. The first and last of these days were considered Sabbaths. (In the Jewish calendar there were occasionally times when a day was designated as a “Sabbath”, even though it was not actually the seventh day of the week.) During this time the Israelites were to dwell in the booths, rejoice in the Lord, and remember the time when their ancestors dwelt in tents after the Lord delivered them from Egypt. While the focus of the Day of Atonement was on mourning and repentance, the focus of the Feast of Tabernacles was on rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord. This holy day was something like our Thanksgiving, only it lasted for an entire week.

There were a great many sacrifices involved with this festival; a list can be found in Numbers 29. By the time the week was over 199 animals were sacrificed.

What I find especially interesting is that during the Millennial Kingdom the surviving Gentile nations will be required to go to Jerusalem and keep this festival:

Zechariah 14:16: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.”

Even during the Millennium the Lord still wants people to look back and remember the great things that God has done.

According to my research, scholars believe that this festival looks forward to the time when Jesus will return and live with His people once again, and reign over the world. The Bible tells us that it will be a time of great peace and great rejoicing. When prophesying about the coming Millennium, the prophet Isaiah wrote this:

Isaiah 65:18: “But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.
19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.”

People will indeed rejoice before the Lord – not for seven days, but for a thousand years.

As you can see, there are some festivals that have been fulfilled and there are some that have not. The Passover was fulfilled when Jesus became our sacrificial Lamb and died on the cross. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled when Jesus led a sinless life and became the Bread of Life for us. The Festival of Firstfruits was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead and became the firstfruits of the resurrection. Pentecost was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came and united the Jews and the Gentiles into one body, the Church.

There remain four unfulfilled festivals. We have not yet entered into our Sabbath rest. Jesus has not yet returned for us at the sound of the trumpet. The Jews have not yet repented of rejecting the Messiah and mourned for their sins. Finally, the age of the Millennial Kingdom has not yet come. The Festival of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Festival of Booths are still in the future – but one day they will be fulfilled. One might say that they are the next events on God's calendar.

THE SONS OF ADAM

In Genesis 5 we find a listing of some of Adam's children:

Genesis 5:1: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;
2 Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”

This chapter tends to get ignored because it is a genealogy. However, it contains some important information that doesn't usually get covered. Because of that I'd like to spend some time going over its contents.

The first thing I'd like to point out is that this genealogy has some peculiar features. For example, take a look at the entry for Adam:

Genesis 5:3: “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image; and called his name Seth:
4 And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters:
5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.”

This verse tells us that Adam had a son named Seth, had other sons and daughters, and then died. All of the listings in this chapter follow the same template: each person had a son, then had other sons and daughters, and then died. I won't quote the entire passage here (you can read it for yourself, if you're interested), but the pattern is repeated time and again.

This brings up a question: was the firstborn child of every single person *really* a son? Nobody had firstborn daughters? For that matter, is this really a listing of *firstborn* children or is there something else going on?

Verse 3 tells us that Adam had a son named Seth. However, we already know that Seth *wasn't* Adam's firstborn; that distinction goes to Cain. Adam had at least two other male children before Seth was born – and possibly more than that, given the fact that Seth was born when Adam was 130 years old. Adam could have had *many* children between the birth of Abel and the birth of Seth. This passage, however, only records one of Adam's children. Cain and Abel don't get mentioned at all.

This passage, then, is *not* a listing of firstborn children, and it's not even a listing of firstborn sons. **This is actually the genealogy of Noah.** The only person mentioned in each generation is the male ancestor of Noah. All of these people had others sons and daughters (as Genesis 5:4 tells us), but they are ignored because they are not in the male line of Noah – who, in turn, is one of the ancestors of Jesus, the Messiah. This is not just Noah's ancestry or our ancestry; it's also the ancestry of Jesus.

Another fact I'd like to point out is that the people in this list **lived for a very, very long time.** There were only 10 generations in the 2,000 years that passed between Adam and the Flood. The following table lists the fathers of each generation, along with how long they lived:

Adam:	930
Seth:	912
Enos:	905
Cainan:	910
Mahalaleel:	895
Jared:	962
Enoch:	365 (He was “translated” at that time.)
Methuselah:	969
Lamech:	777
Noah:	950

If you discount Enoch (who never died) and Lamech, then people on average lived to be 929 years old. These are not “figurative” ages but real ones. These people really did live to be almost a thousand years old. That seems like a staggeringly long time, but remember that mankind was created to live *forever*. If Adam had not sinned then he would have *never died at all*. Even with the consequences of sin, though, he still lived for more than nine centuries.

As I'm sure you've noticed, people don't live this long anymore. Despite what evolutionists will tell you, mankind has *not* improved over the millennia. Instead we've decayed. Our genetic code, which was once perfect, is now filled with mutations. We are becoming *less* fit over time. We aren't evolving into a higher life form; instead we're degrading.

Imagine building a mansion in the middle of a forest and then abandoning it for a few centuries. When you returned you wouldn't find an even bigger mansion that had been upgraded with all of the latest amenities. No, I'm afraid that you would only find ruin and decay. The human race is like that. We are not improving; instead we're falling apart. At one time men lived for nine centuries, but now it's remarkable if someone lives for nine decades. That is just a glimpse at how far we've fallen.

Another interesting thing is that people had children at remarkably old ages:

Seth:	105
Enos:	90
Cainan:	70
Mahalaleel:	65
Jared:	162
Enoch:	65
Methuselah:	187
Lamech:	182
Noah:	500

By modern standards it seems astounding to be having children when you're 90 years old (to say nothing of 187), but given their incredibly long lifespan it's not as strange as it seems. According to the 2008 CIA World Factbook, the average life expectancy for someone living in the United States is 77.5 – 80 years. This means that before the Flood people lived **12 times longer** than we do today. Having a child at 116 would be the equivalent of having a child at the age of 10. People lived so much longer before the Flood that for them being 100 was practically still being in your childhood. Even Noah, who had his first child at the age of 500, has an “equivalent” age of just 42.

After the Flood the average lifespan dropped off dramatically. The following table lists how old each person was when they had their first son, along with how many years they lived after the birth of that child:

Noah: 950

Shem: $100 + 500 = 600$ (but had his firstborn 2 years after the Flood, so the flood happened when he was 98.)

Arphaxad: $35 + 403 = 438$

Salah: $30 + 403 = 433$

Eber: $34 + 430 = 464$

Peleg: $30 + 209 = 239$

Reu: $32 + 207 = 239$

Serug: $30 + 200 = 230$

Nahor: $29 + 119 = 148$

Terah: bore Abraham at the age of 70 but lived to be 205.

Abraham: 175 years, but had Isaac when he was 100.

Isaac: 180 years. Had his twin sons when he was ~40.

Looking at these genealogies reveals some interesting facts. Noah lived a normal lifespan for someone born before the Flood, but his children did not. Even though his children were born before the Flood, their lives were dramatically shortened. In fact, the lives of *everyone* were shortened. In just eight generations the average lifespan of man dropped from 929 years down to less than 200 years.

This indicates that there were probably two factors involved with the shortening lifespans: an environmental cause (after all, something shortened Shem's life by 350 years) and a genetic cause. It's difficult to say what these causes were because we don't have access to any pre-Flood human DNA and we also don't really know what the pre-Flood Earth was like. What we do know is that the Flood destroyed the world and devastated the lifespan of mankind. After the Flood the world was never the same.

If we look closely at the data we will discover another interesting fact. Abraham was born less than three centuries after the Flood:

Flood to Abraham: 292 years

Abraham to Isaac: +100 years = 392

Isaac to Jacob: +40 years = 432 years

Why is this interesting? Well, Noah lived for 350 years after the Flood. Only 292 years elapsed between the Flood and the birth of Abraham, so Noah would have died when Abraham was about 58 years old. Shem lived 502 years after the Flood, so he would have lived long enough to have known Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (as Jacob was born ~432 years after the Flood). I do not know if these people actually knew each other, but they were contemporaries.

It's amazing to think that Shem was still alive when Jacob and Esau were growing up. At that point in history you could still talk to someone who had lived in the pre-Flood world. The Flood was not a mere memory; there was still a living eyewitness.

Of course, you can't talk about Genesis 5 without talking about **Enoch**:

Genesis 5:21: "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:

22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:
24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

Enoch is one of the most famous characters in the Bible. His fame stems from the fact that he is one of only two people who have never died (the other being Elijah). Genesis says very little about Enoch except that he “walked with God” and one day he was not found, for God had taken him. However, other passages in the Bible have more to say on this topic.

Hebrews 11:5: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

This passage states that Enoch was “translated” (or *raptured*) because of his faith. Enoch pleased God and therefore God supernaturally delivered him from death. The passage goes on to say that you must have faith in order to please God. His faith in God is what led to his translation.

This is one of the reasons why some believe that Enoch's translation is a foreshadowing of the Rapture. Christ told us that the time before His return would be as the days of Noah:

Matthew 24:37: “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

We know that the world of Noah's day ignored Noah's warnings about the coming judgment and perished in the Flood. God told Noah to build an ark, and Noah had to live through the Flood and through the judgment of the entire world. Enoch, however, was different. The Lord removed Enoch from the world before the Flood took place – not only sparing his life, but also sparing him from having to live through the judgment of the world. Why was Enoch “raptured”? Because he had faith in God.

The same things can be said about the Church. The true Church – those who are born-again believers in Christ – have faith in God and please Him. Before God judges the world for its sins the Lord will “translate” the Church so that it will not see death. We will then be with God. The parallel between Enoch's translation and the Rapture is quite remarkable.

Nor is this all that the Bible has to say about Enoch. The last mention of Enoch in the Bible is found here:

Jude 1:14: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

This passage mentions a prophesy from Enoch, who was the seventh generation from Adam. (Yes, the number seven is a special number; it signifies completion.) It turns out that Enoch was a prophet; in fact, as far as anyone knows, Enoch was the very first prophet. In this passage he prophesied about a time when the Lord would return to Earth with his saints (also known as “The

Church”) to judge the wicked. This event has not yet happened, but will occur as a part of the Second Coming. Enoch, then, prophesied about the Second Coming *thousands of years before the first coming of Christ!* This is the oldest prophesy about the Second Coming in the Bible.

There is one other area where we can see Enoch's prophetic gift. Enoch named his son Methuselah, which literally means “When he dies, it will come”. This name was actually a prophecy. Methuselah lived to be 969 years old, which is longer than anyone else recorded in the Bible. The year that he died the Flood came and put an end to the old world – just as Enoch had prophesied.

On a related note, the name “Noah” means “comfort”. It is thought that Lamech named his son Noah because he thought that Noah would be the Messiah and put an end to the world's evil. This is what he said when naming his son:

Genesis 5:28: “And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son:

29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.”

Here Lamech refers to the curse that God inflicted upon the world because of Adam's sin. Lamech was 56 years old when Adam died, so it's possible that he had heard firsthand of what life was like in the Garden of Eden. He apparently believed that Noah would reverse the curse and put things back to the way they were, but that did not happen. It's true that a descendant of Lamech will one day reverse the curse, but that descendant is Jesus, not Noah.

THE NEPHILIM

Genesis 6 begins with a tale of intermarriage between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men”. This union created giants, or “nephilim” in Hebrew. This intermarriage was so evil that it prompted a terrible punishment from the Lord and led to the great Flood. The question is, who were these giants? This is not a topic that is commonly discussed but I believe it's worth investigating.

Let's start by taking a look at the passage itself:

Genesis 6:1: “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,
2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.
3 And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.
4 There were giants⁵³⁰³ in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men¹³⁶⁸ which were of old, men of renown.”

There are a few interesting things about this passage. First of all, no “daughters of God” married “sons of men” – it went strictly the other way. Second, the union resulted only in *sons*. None of the children became “mighty women” and there is no evidence that any *daughters* were born to these couples. That in itself is quite strange and hints that something unusual is going on.

Some claim that the “sons of God” refers to godly men and the “daughters of men” refers to sinful women, and that the passage is speaking about the dangers of marrying unbelievers. But if that is the case then why weren't any daughters born to these couples and why did their offspring become giants? Verse 4 clearly says that each one of these children became “mighty men” of extraordinary ability. All of these facts make it highly unlikely that this is a simple case of believers marrying unbelievers. I think that something else is going on – something quite unusual and disturbing.

We can learn a little more about what is going on by examining the passage's key words. In Hebrew, they are:

Mighty men: 1368. Powerful, warrior, tyrant, champion, chief, giant, mighty, strong.

Giants: 5303. Hebrew: “nephil”. “It means a bully, a tyrant, a giant. It appears three times in the OT (Gen 6:4, Num 13:33). Since the etymology is uncertain, there is much speculation among reputable scholars concerning the nature of these individuals. Until more evidence becomes available, perhaps it is wise to do as the RSV and NIV translations did: render it “Nephilim”.

Right away we can see that we've stumbled across a mystery. The very definition of the Hebrew word “nephil” is so fraught with uncertainty that scholars recommend the word *remain untranslated!* Once again, if these people are simply humans then why is there all this mystery? If the author had wanted to describe sinful people then there are a lot of clear and well-understood Hebrew words that he

could have used, but instead he chose a word that is cloaked in mystery and uncertainty. There is clearly something significant going on here.

For the record, the only other use of the word “nephilim” (giants) in the Bible can be found here:

Numbers 13:33: “And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”

Notice the description of these beings. The Israeli spies reported that the nephilim were giants of extraordinary size, which matches the description in Genesis 6. These were clearly not normal people and the Israelites were terrified at the sight of them. Of course, this just deepens the mystery. What is going on here?

I believe the key to understanding this passage can be found in the use of the phrase “sons of God”. Each nephilim had two parents: a “son of God” and a “daughter of man”. The phrase “daughter of man” literally means “female”, so that's easy enough to understand. But who were the sons of God? As it turns out, that phrase is used in exactly three other places in the Old Testament. All three occur in the book of Job, and in each case the phrase refers to *angels*:

Job 1:6: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.”

Job 2:1: “Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.”

Job 38:4: “Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.

5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it?

6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof;

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

As you can see, in each case the beings known as the “sons of God” are angels, not men. It's true that in the New Testament believers are called “sons of God” (John 1:12) but at the time when Genesis 6:1-4 was written that was not the case. Job is one of the oldest books of the Bible and it is not a stretch to imagine that the Hebrew phrase “sons of God” carries the same meaning in both Job and Genesis. Therefore, if “sons of God” means “angels” in Job then it also means “angels” in Genesis 6. In this particular case it refers to *fallen* angels, or demons. If the nephilim were the product of a demonic father and a human mother then they would be half-demon and half-human. It's no wonder they were beings of terrible power and breathtaking evil!

It's also worth noting the difference between a “son of man” and a “son of God”: sons of men are *born* while sons of God are *created*. A son of God refers to a being that was created directly by God Himself, which would include Adam and the angels. Once Christ appeared He made it possible for others to become “sons of God” by becoming Christians, but that was not an option in the Old

Testament. (Many Old Testament people were saved, but none of them were ever called sons of God. That only started happening in the New Testament after the appearance of Christ.) Aside from Adam and Eve, all humans are born from human parents and are not created by a direct act of divine will.

(As a side-note, notice that all angels were created directly by God Himself. Angels do not have other angels as parents, nor do they bear offspring. They were all divinely created and therefore they are all “sons of God”).

Some have objected to this interpretation and say that in the New Testament Jesus says that angels are not given in marriage. That statement is true: in Heaven angels do not marry. However, the Bible never says that angels are *incapable* of intermarrying with humans, nor does it say that angelic creatures never marry *on Earth*. What *is* clear is that they are not allowed to marry humans, and that doing so is a great sin that damns the angel for all of eternity. It is not surprising that angels don't marry in Heaven because in Heaven the Lord's will is done. *Demons, however, have no interest in doing the Lord's will.*

I believe Genesis 6 teaches that in the days before the Flood, demons intermarried with humans and produced a new race of powerful, evil beings. This race (which was composed entirely of men) was destroyed by the Flood, which wiped out everyone except for the line of Noah. What's particularly interesting about this is that Noah's genealogy did not include any of these “sons of God”. This is critically important because *the Messiah had to be a pure human*. No Messiah could be part human, part God, and part demon! (This, by the way, is what the Bible means when it says that Noah was perfect in his generations. He was a purebred human and had no demons in his ancestry.)

The nephilim were actually a clever plan by Satan: he was trying to corrupt the genetic line of man in order to make it impossible for the Messiah to come. God solved that problem by wiping out the nephilim in the Flood. In this context the Flood makes a lot of sense – it was *vital* for everything that was tainted by demonic DNA to be wiped out. Of course, Satan wasn't content with just attempting this once; he later tried it again in the land of Canaan in order to stop the Israelites from entering the Promised Land. This could be another reason why God ordered every last Canaanite destroyed – He wanted the nephilim wiped out.

There are a couple of other passages that may be related to the nephilim. The first one can be found in 2 Peter:

2 Peter 2:4: “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell⁵⁰²⁰, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;”

The word that is used for “hell” in this passage is a very special one that is used *only in this one passage*. This is its definition:

Hell: 5020. “Found only in its verbal form in 2 Peter 2:4, meaning to consign to Tartarus (which is neither Sheol of the OT, nor Hades of the NT, nor Gehenna, nor hell, but the place where certain angels are confined, reserved unto judgment). This punishment for these angels is because of their special sin.”

Notice what this says here. These fallen angels (or demons) are confined to a special place called Tartarus. This is actually *not* the same “hell” that we're all familiar with. When people die without accepting Jesus they go to hell, not Tartarus. Tartarus is a special place that is populated only

by demons who committed a very special and terrible sin. To put it another way, there are actually *two* hells – the normal one and Tartarus. Humans cannot be sent to Tartarus. It is reserved strictly for a special class of demons.

Now it's obvious that there are many demons that are not bound in Tartarus. Quite a few of them wander over the surface of the Earth and cause all sorts of horrors. Yet there are some demons who committed a sin so terrible that they are no longer permitted to wander the earth. If this is an accurate reading of the text then what sin did they commit? Isn't it quite likely that the demons that are spoken of here are the “sons of God” that created the nephilim in Genesis 6, and that their great sin was intermarrying with humans?

I think it's worth noting that in the *very next verse* Peter speaks of Noah and the Flood. Isn't it possible that the two verses are related – that the great sin of these angels had something to do with the Flood that destroyed the old world? If fallen angels did intermarry with humans and produced a race of evil offspring, then it would make sense that the Lord would judge it, and it would make sense to mention the Flood when referring to this event. It would also be easy to understand why the Lord imprisoned these demons; He didn't want them doing it again.

There is one other possible mention of this event. It can be found in Jude:

Jude 1:6: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation³⁶¹³, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Here we have another mention of angels that are “reserved in everlasting chains” and waiting for the final judgment. The very next verse speaks of Sodom and Gomorrhah, highlighting it as *a second* example of what happens to those who engage in fornication and immorality. Note the use of the phrase “even as”, which seems to indicate that both the angels *and* Sodom were guilty of the same type of sin. If Jude is speaking of fallen angels that intermarried with humans then this makes a lot of sense, for in that case both the demons and the residents of Sodom were guilty of fornication and gross sexual misconduct.

In summary, Genesis 6 teaches that before the Flood, demons took human women for wives and had children with them, producing a strange, fallen, depraved race called the nephilim. The Lord judged this act of wickedness by destroying that race in the Flood and imprisoning the demons who committed this sin in Tartarus, awaiting judgment in the last day.

HEAVEN

I thought it would be a good idea to take some time to explore what the Bible has to say about Heaven. This is not an exhaustive discussion of the topic, so if that is what you are looking for then I would strongly recommend the book *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn. In that book Alcorn examines the subject with tremendous thoroughness and does a fantastic job of staying true to the Scriptures.

What I would like to do is go over a number of the highlights in order to give people a better idea of what Heaven is like. Along the way I hope to put to rest a number of common misconceptions. My plan is to approach the subject one passage at a time and explore what each one has to say.

The Criminal on the Cross

When Jesus was crucified He had a short conversation with someone else who was also being crucified – a conversation that tells us something interesting about Heaven. The passage can be found in Luke:

Luke 23:39: “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Did you catch the significance of what Jesus said in verse 43? He knew that all three of them were going to die that day, and they did. However, Jesus promised the repentant criminal that he would be in Paradise with Jesus *that day*. This tells us that when people die they don't just “sleep” until Judgment Day – they *immediately* go on to either Heaven or Hell. In the case of the criminal it was straight on to Heaven; in the case of the unnamed rich man (who we will discuss in the next section) it was on to a place of fire and torment.

Also notice that the man went straight to Heaven, *not* to Purgatory. The concept of Purgatory is highly unbiblical, for a great many reasons that I will not explore here. For the moment it is enough to point out that Jesus did not say “Today you will go to Purgatory and spend many long years there suffering for your sins, but if you hang on long enough you will eventually make it to Paradise.”

The Rich Man and Lazarus

In Luke 16 the Lord recounts the tale of the rich man and Lazarus. It is important to notice that this story is *not* given as a parable. Jesus does not start out by saying “The kingdom of Heaven is like...” The Lord simply says that there was once a rich man and a beggar and then explains what happened to them. The story is presented as history and should be treated as such.

Let's take a look at the passage and see what it has to tell us:

Luke 16:19: “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

There are a couple things we can glean from this part of the parable. First, notice that both people went somewhere *as soon as they died*. Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom and the rich man found himself in Hell. Once again we see that the notion of “soul sleep” is not correct; upon death they were both judged and sent to either a place of rest or a place of torment.

It's also worth noticing that the beggar was *carried by angels*. I don't know if this happens every time a righteous person dies, but it did happen this time and it is worth mentioning. Finally, notice that the rich man immediately recognized Abraham, even though he never met him in life. It would seem that in the afterlife you know everyone and everyone knows you.

As you might imagine, the rich man was not happy. He was in a great deal of torment:

Luke 16:24: “And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

The rich man clearly has a physical body of some sort because he can feel pain, has a tongue, and is thirsty. The flame is tormenting him and he wants something cool to ease his pain. This man is not suffering from mere “separation from God”. Instead he is desperately hot and thirsty and longs for something to ease his *physical* suffering. He is not a disembodied spirit but clearly has a body that is able to take nourishment. Abraham must have a body as well because the rich man begs Abraham to dip his finger in water. This implies that Abraham has fingers, which indicates that the body we will have between our death and our resurrection is quite similar to the one we have now.

Moreover, notice that the rich man *recognizes* both Abraham and Lazarus. Some people think that when you die you will no longer remember your life or recognize anyone that you used to know. The rich man, however, clearly recognized the beggar that used to lay at his gate. He remembered him and knew who he was. In fact, even Abraham was aware of their past history, which we see in the next verse:

Luke 16:25: “But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

Here Abraham makes another interesting point. Both Abraham and the rich man *remembers the rich man's life on Earth*. Some people believe that when you die you will no longer remember what you did on Earth, but this is clearly *not* the case. Abraham is reminding the rich man that when he was still alive he had a good life. The past has not disappeared.

What is especially interesting is that *Abraham* remembers the life of the rich man, even though the rich man had never met Abraham. This means either that Abraham watched the rich man while he was still alive, or that in the afterlife everyone knows the entire life history of everyone else.

The passage goes on:

Luke 16:26: “And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”

This is another interesting point: there will be no mercy missions from Paradise to Hell. Those who are in one place cannot pass over to the other place. The righteous saints who are rejoicing in God's kingdom have no fear of ever finding themselves in Hell. There is no road that can take them there because an impassable gulf separates the two.

Since no one can go and help the rich man, he asks Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers:

Luke 16:27: “Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:
28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

This brings out another interesting point: the rich man was aware of what was going on back home! Jesus does not tell us how he knew, but the rich man clearly recognized that his brothers were still alive and were also in danger of Hell. At this point he realized that he made a terrible mistake and that it was too late for him to do anything, and he longed to rescue his brothers. One has to wonder: if people in Hell are aware of what is happening on Earth, then isn't it also possible that people in Heaven have that same awareness?

There are just three verses left:

Luke 16:29: “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.
30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.
31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

This is the end of the story. What I find especially interesting is that there really was One who rose from the dead and told people the truth about what was beyond death. That man was Jesus Christ –

and people have not listened to Him either.

The Unrighteous Steward

This unusual story talks about a person who was falsely accused of being wasteful. The Lord uses this story to point out that the lost are sometimes wiser than the saved because the lost are smart enough to use their money to win friends, while the saved do not use their resources to build relationships that will last throughout eternity.

We can find this story in the book of Luke:

Luke 16:1: “And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, how much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”

In this story (which may also be a true historical account, because it does not begin with the phrase “The kingdom of Heaven is like...”) a servant is falsely accused of being wasteful. (I realize this is not apparent in English, but the word translated “accused” in verse 1 is actually a Greek word that implies that the accusation was false.) As a result of this false accusation the servant's master tells him that he is going to be fired. The steward realizes that this means he will have no way to support himself, and so he comes up with a brilliant idea: he goes around to each person that owes his master money and cancels a part of their debt. This has two benefits: first, it makes it easier for them to repay the debt and ensures that his master will at least get a partial payment, and second, it makes the debtors grateful and willing to help the steward in return.

The lesson that Christ draws from this is interesting. He says that His followers should use the world's resources to build relationships and help others so that when they die they will be received “into everlasting habitations”. In other words, after everyone dies and is in Heaven, those who were helped will *remember* the people who helped them and will open their homes to them. They will be

grateful and will reward the giver. What was given will be repaid on a much grander scale.

In other words, people *will* have homes in Heaven, they will remember what happened during their lives in this world, and the relationships that they had on Earth will continue in Heaven. Jesus wants us to take advantage of those facts and build relationships here so that we will be rewarded in Heaven. The people who you helped in this life will reward you in the next.

The Martyrs

In Revelation chapter 6 we are given a picture of a group of martyrs in Heaven. What is interesting about this picture is what the martyrs are doing. They offer us a valuable insight about what life is like in Heaven:

Revelation 6:9: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

This passage reveals something amazing about Heaven that is often overlooked or misunderstood. First of all, we've already established that when people die they immediately go to either Heaven or Hell. Because of this there's no reason to think that these martyrs are somehow figurative. These are real people who were executed for their faith in Jesus Christ, and they are now in Heaven crying out to God.

What many people miss is what the martyrs are doing. These individuals, who are in Heaven with the Lord, are crying out for *vengeance*. They are not happy, blissful souls. They remember their lives on Earth and know that they were unjustly murdered, and they are asking God to do something about it. They *still care* about what happened to them and they know that they have not been avenged. They have not simply “moved on” and “gotten over it”. This is more evidence that after people die they still know what is going on back on Earth – and those who were mistreated still long for justice *even after they are dead*.

The Lord's response is interesting: He gives them white robes and tells them that they need to wait a little longer. He doesn't refuse their request or rebuke them for it. In fact, He promises to grant it in a little while, after more people have been martyred. That is when He will pour out His wrath upon the Earth and judge the world for all its wickedness.

Time

Some people say that time does not pass in Heaven. However, Revelation says otherwise:

Revelation 8:1: “And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”

Here we see that at one point there was silence in Heaven for thirty minutes. Thirty minutes is an interval of *time*. If there was no time in Heaven then there couldn't be any thirty-minute periods! In fact there wouldn't be any time periods at all, so if there are time periods in Heaven then there must be time. More than that, however, if *anything* is happening in Heaven then there must be time. Think about it: how can one thing happen and then something else happen next if there is no such thing as time? Time is the distance between events.

If you think about it, the idea of time not existing doesn't make any sense. Time simply means that one event happens after another event. If there was no such thing as time then nothing could *ever* happen!

So where does this idea come from? The phrase “time shall be no more” *is* found in one passage in the Bible. That passage is this one:

Revelation 10:5: “And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,
6 And swore by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:
7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

This passage is *not* teaching that time itself will come to an end. As we've already discussed, that idea makes no sense, and it contradicts what was said just two chapters earlier. What this passage is saying is that one day an angel will say that “the mystery of God” would be finished. The phrase “there should be time no longer” means the same thing as “it's run out of time” or “there is no time left”. We say things like this all the time. All the angel is saying is that one day the mystery will finally be finished because the time in which it was being kept hidden will be over.

Animals

One very common question is whether or not animals go to Heaven when they die. As you probably know, the Bible does not directly answer this question. It is clear that God cares about animals; when He destroyed the Earth in the Flood He had Noah create a large ark so that the animal kingdom would be saved. Jesus told us that God knows every sparrow that falls, and in Job the Lord took great pride in telling Job about some of the animals He had created. They are definitely on His mind – but the Bible does not say what happens to them.

However, Ecclesiastes does say something interesting. In Chapter 3 Solomon says this:

Ecclesiastes 3:18: “I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are

beasts.

19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"

Verse 21 is interesting. Notice how it appears to say that there is something that lives after the animal dies; both man and beast have a spirit that lives on after death. Now, the spirit of the animal does not appear to go to the same place as the spirit of the man, but something *does* happen to it. I realize this is not conclusive, but it is interesting.

Another point to consider is that God definitely has the power and the ability to bring animals to Heaven. Animals have never sinned so they would not be disqualified from being in the presence of God. At the very least there is no reason to believe that animals go to Hell, for Hell is reserved for sinners and animals cannot sin. Besides, if someone loved one of their animals and asked God to bring it back to life – well, would it really be outside of His character to grant their request?

The End of the Earth

When the Lord destroyed the planet in the great Flood back in Noah's day He promised mankind that He would never again destroy the entire planet with a Flood. However, He did *not* promise to never again destroy the Earth, and the day will come when the Earth will be destroyed. The Lord talks about this judgment in 2 Peter:

2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

In this passage we are told that one day the Lord is going to destroy the Earth and everything in it with fire. Everything that this planet contains will be destroyed: the elements themselves will melt and the very heavens will be on fire. All of the works that are in it – both great and small – will be destroyed. Nothing that we see today will survive. Those who trusted Christ will live forever and will never die, but all of their possessions in this world will be lost. Nothing on this planet will last forever.

That, however, will not be the end. After this happens the Lord has promised to create a new heaven and a new Earth. Of particular interest is the word that is translated "new". It does not mean new in the sense of a second one, but new in the sense of taking something and restoring it to its original condition – in other words, making something new again. The Lord is not done with this

planet. He will destroy it with fire but then He will remake it to the way it once was, before sin entered in and before the great Curse wrought havoc. This new place will not be an evil world but a world of righteousness and peace. The old world – so filled with suffering and pain and death – will be gone forever.

The Great White Throne Judgment

The Bible tells us that at the end of history (although in one sense history will have no end) there will be a great judgment where many will stand before the throne of God and be judged. This takes place after the Millennial Kingdom and is discussed in Revelation 20:

Revelation 20:11: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

In this judgment all of the dead are brought before God. No one is excluded, no matter how they died or where they were. Hell itself is emptied of all the souls it contains. It is critical to understand that the people who will be judged here are *the dead*. The reason this matters is because this judgment takes place in the second half of Revelation 20. In the first half of this chapter the Lord returned to Earth, raised all of the *righteous* back to life, and together they lived and reign for a thousand years. This judgment takes place *after* that. This means that the only people who will still be dead at this time are all of the wicked who have lived throughout time, and all those who died during the millennial kingdom. The Church will not be included in this judgment because they were raised to life at the Rapture and therefore will not be among the dead. Likewise, the Old Testament believers and the Tribulation saints were raised to life at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and therefore will not be among the dead either. It is very important to realize this; otherwise we will come away with a misunderstanding concerning who this judgment affects.

In this judgment all of “the dead” are judged. Those whose names are found in the Book of Life are spared and will go on into eternity, and those whose names are *not* found are cast into the Lake of Fire, where they will be tormented forever. Death and Hell are also cast into the Lake of Fire. This is important: after the final judgment Hell is emptied and the lost spend eternity in the *Lake of Fire*. Nobody will spend eternity in Hell because Hell is just a temporary holding place that will be emptied at this judgment.

The New Heaven and Earth

After the Earth is destroyed by fire and after Judgment Day, the Lord will create a new heaven and Earth. This is discussed in detail in the last few chapters of Revelation. I will only quote the first few verses here:

Revelation 21:1: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

These verses say some very important things. First, as was stated earlier, the current heaven and Earth will not last forever. One day they will both be destroyed. However, after they are destroyed they will be made new again. That is what the word “new” means in verse 1. The Earth is going to be restored to way it was before sin and death and the Curse had their way with it, much like a wrecked car is brought back to its original beauty.

We have already seen that Hell is not the final resting place of the unrighteous dead. Those who did not place their faith and trust in Jesus are brought out of Hell on Judgment Day and cast into the Lake of Fire. Likewise, Heaven is not the final resting place of the righteous dead. 2 Peter 3:13 tells us that the saved are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth – and *that* is where the righteous will live forever with God.

Take another look at what these verses say. The great city the New Jerusalem will come out of Heaven and *down to Earth*. God then promises to dwell with men *on Earth* and be their God. He will banish forever all death, sorrow, crying, and pain. This place – this new Earth – is where God Himself will dwell. It will be His home and *our* home.

The rest of Revelation goes on to describe the fabulous city that is called the New Jerusalem. I will not go into all the details here; you can read them at your leisure.

The Final State

What will people be doing on this new Earth? Well, for one thing, as we've just mentioned, they will be living in a city (the New Jerusalem). We're familiar with cities and know that they are points of civilization, filled with all kinds of jobs and opportunities. It is exciting to speculate about what a race of perfect immortals might spend their time doing – especially with no sin, evil, or death to get in the way! There is nothing inherently evil with science, art, or sports, and there is no reason to believe that

they won't be present. The key difference will be that *everything* will be God-centered, for we will finally be able to see things as they really are and will be able to serve God with all of our being.

Revelation chapter 22 does hint at what people will be doing through all of those ages:

Revelation 22:3: “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.”

It is easy to miss but it's right there in verse 3 – “His servants shall serve Him”. Throughout all the ages of eternity His people will continue to serve Him with all of their God-given talents and abilities. Today we struggle to serve God through infirmaries and disease and sin and evil. One day we will serve God with perfect minds, perfect bodies, and in sinless perfection.

But that's not all! There is one other hint mentioned in verse 5 – we will reign *forever*. The Bible hints in a number of places that God has made us a race of kings and priests, and that throughout eternity we will reign with God. For example:

Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

This is found right at the beginning of Revelation. Here we are told that Jesus Christ has made us kings and priests. The job of kings is *to reign*, and this idea of reigning is repeated later on:

Revelation 5:9: “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Once again we have the idea of reigning. It is clear that we will serve the Lord and one way we will do this is by reigning on the Earth. It's an exciting idea! But what will we be reigning over? The answer to this is hinted at in Isaiah:

Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Notice how verse 7 says that the Lord's government will continue to increase *forever*. This

implies an eternal state of growth. And in what way will it grow? Is it possible that new beings will be added to the Kingdom? It doesn't say – but it *is* clear that stagnation is not in the picture. God is infinite and will never run dry; the full extent of His creativity cannot even be imagined. We will never have to worry about getting bored. God's kingdom will continue to increase for all the ages of eternity, and the Lord has given us the unimaginable blessing of not only being there, but being there as a race of *kings*.

Treasures and Rewards

One final issue that must be raised before concluding a study on Heaven is the issue of rewards. This subject was brought up by Christ Himself in the Sermon on the Mount. The passage is found in Matthew chapter 5:

Matthew 5:19: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Here Jesus says something very interesting. Notice that He does not forbid the accumulation of wealth; in fact He commands it! However there is a twist: He wants us to lay up our treasures *in Heaven*. Jesus points out that if we amass fortunes on Earth we will lose them one way or another because this planet is full of corruption and thieves (not to mention the fact that one day this world will be destroyed). It's much wiser to lay up our wealth in Heaven because there it cannot be lost or stolen. Plus, if we lay up our treasures in Heaven we will have our heart there as well – and the Lord very much wants our heart to be centered on Heaven.

At the very least it's clear that it is possible to lay up treasures in Heaven. This means that there must be some way to take our resources and move them into a Heavenly account. Not only is it *possible* to do this, but Jesus *commands* us to do this!

We already discussed the idea of using earthly resources to accomplish something in Heaven when we touched on the parable of the unrighteous servant. There Jesus pointed out the wisdom of using money to help other people so that in Heaven they will invite us to their homes and reward us. But are there other ways to lay up rewards? I believe so. Matthew 10 says this:

Matthew 10:40: “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.
41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.
42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

Here Jesus talks about rewards for helping people who are in need. The idea of receiving a person is to take them for who they are – for example, to accept a prophet as a prophet instead of

opposing him and trying to shoot him down. The actions that merit rewards do not have to be great; one example Christ gives is simply giving a child a drink of cold water. These are the kind of things that lay up treasures in Heaven.

Some people object to the idea of treasures in Heaven and claim that everyone will have the same thing and that no one will be greater than anyone else. However, the Bible indicates otherwise. Take this passage as an example:

Matthew 19:27: “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?
28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Here Peter told Christ that the disciples had sacrificed everything in order to follow Him, and he wanted to know what their reward would be. If there were no rewards this would have been a perfect time for Jesus to correct Peter (and Jesus certainly didn't hesitate to correct Peter on other occasions!), but that didn't happen. Instead of telling Peter that he was wrong to even think about rewards, Christ told him that they would receive something special: they would become kings, sit on 12 thrones, and judge the 12 tribes of Israel.

Now, notice that there are only 12 of these thrones and they were given to the disciples. This isn't something that is going to be given to everyone; you and I are not going to be sitting on any of those thrones. This obviously means that the idea that “everyone gets the same thing” is quite wrong, for the disciples are given an honor that no one else will have.

The apostle Paul reinforces this idea:

I Corinthians 3:11: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;
13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.
14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.
15 If any man's work shall be burned, he himself shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

Here Paul states that the works we do in our lives will be put to the test. If a man's work endures (in other words, if it was the right sort of work) then he will be rewarded. If it does *not* endure then he “shall suffer loss” and will *not* be rewarded. Verses 14 and 15 clearly indicate that it is possible for some people to be rewarded while others walk away empty-handed. This strongly argues against the idea that everyone will be given the same thing.

This means it's possible to enter Heaven and find rewards waiting, and it is also possible to enter Heaven and find that you wasted your life and accomplished nothing. Christ Himself warns of this possibility:

Luke 16:10: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he

that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mannan, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

Here Jesus clearly states that God is concerned about our faithfulness. God notices those who are faithful and those who are faithless. What is interesting is the conclusion – the passage implies that only those who are faithful in earthly things will be entrusted with “true riches”. *The Lord puts a difference between His faithful servants and His unfaithful servants.*

This warning is made even more graphic in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:45: “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

49 And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Here we see not just a faithless servant but an evil one. The Lord paints a picture of a master who comes home and catches his servants in action. The servant that is caught being faithful is given a tremendous reward of greater responsibilities, higher honor, and deeper service. At the same time, the servant that is caught being faithless is fired. He loses his position and is thrown out with the hypocrites. He does not find joy at his master's return; instead he finds sorrow.

It is tempting to think that the faithless servant in this passage symbolizes the lost, but Luke 19 makes it clear that that is not the case:

Luke 19:12: “He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laidst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they say unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

Here we have a retelling of the same basic idea. Once again the faithful servants are rewarded with greater positions of authority; instead of managing a sum of money they are now responsible for managing entire cities. It's worth noticing that their reward is *completely* out of proportion with their service. A relatively small act of faithfulness was rewarded with a tremendous, breathtaking reward.

However, the faithless servant has his position of service taken away from him and given to someone else. He was condemned, fired from his job, and left with nothing. It should be stressed, however, that this person is *not* one of the lost. The lost are pictured in verse 27 where the master states that all those who refused to accept his lordship were to be punished by death. That gives us *three* categories: the faithful servants (who were rewarded), the unfaithful servants (who received no reward and who lost their position), and those who refused to be a servant at all (who were executed).

The Bible is very clear that the Lord puts a difference between the faithful and the faithless. He cares about what we do with our lives, and after our death He either rewards us or does not reward us. This is an *entirely different thing* from punishing sin. The Lord took upon Himself the punishment for all of our sin, and our sins have indeed been done away with. When we die and stand before God we will not be punished for them. However, based on the way we lived our lives we may or may not be rewarded. The Lord told us to lay up treasures in Heaven, and if we refuse to do that then we have only ourselves to blame.

IN THE BEGINNING

There are few passages of Scripture that are attacked or doubted more than Genesis 1-3. A great many Christians today have rejected them altogether. I believe that this is a terrible tragedy, because the doctrine of salvation is built upon these first three chapters. If we abandon them to the cries of an unbelieving world then we are left with nothing.

One key fact that we must keep in mind is that the Scriptures are always correct. The Bible is not true because science validates it; the Bible is true because it was written by God and therefore cannot be wrong. If we want to know the truth we must always start with the Bible. Science can be wrong (and often is) but the Bible is never wrong. It is our foundation.

In Genesis 1 we find the account of the creation of the world – an act that took place over six days. The days of creation are:

Day 1: On the first day of creation God creates the light and divides it from the darkness:

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

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the **first day**.”

As we can see, God names the light “Day” and the darkness “Night”. A few points:

- God creates things and then names them, signifying His ownership of them. This will be a common, repeated theme.
- In verse 5 we are told that “the evening and the morning were the first day”. In the Jewish calendar a day consists of an evening and a morning; Genesis 1 is the reason behind this.
- The “evening and morning” theme is repeated for each of the six days of creation. God seems to be going out of His way to emphasize the fact that these are normal days, with one evening and one morning each – not incredibly long periods of time. God could have said “and all this happened over an incredibly long period of time”, but He did not.
- Note that God created Day and Night before creating the sun, moon, and stars (which were not created until day four).
- Also, note that God creates things simply by His Word – He said it, and it happened. If we want to make something we have to form it using whatever materials are available. God, however, needs no raw materials; He can simply speak and it is so. This is far beyond anything that man can do.

Day 2: On the second day of creation God creates the sky:

Genesis 1:6: “And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the **second day.**”

Here we see that God creates a “firmament in the midst of the waters”, which He names “Heaven”. Some of these waters are gathered under the firmament and become Seas in verse 10. The waters above the firmament are not mentioned again in this chapter. What this verse is saying is that God created the sky to separate the water under the sky from the water *above* the sky.

But just where is this ocean that is above the sky? This verse has puzzled a great many people over the years. I have a theory about what is going on, but since it is rather complicated I will not explain it here. You can find the theory in the appendix “The Ocean in the Sky” (located at the end of this paper).

Day 3: On the third day of creation God separates the dry land from the water:

Genesis 1:9: “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

12 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

13 And the evening and the morning were the **third day.**”

God names the dry land “Earth” and the gathering of water “Seas”. God then commands the dry land to bring forth plants.

It is interesting to note that God commands the plants to bring forth “after his kind”. There is no hint that the plants are supposed to evolve into other creatures, as evolution proposes. Each creature that God creates was commanded to reproduce after their own kind. That pretty much shuts the door on the idea that God used evolution to create the world.

Also, note that at this point God has still not created the sun, moon, or stars.

Day 4: On the fourth day of creation God creates the sun, the moon, and the stars:

Genesis 1:14: “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to

divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

19 And the evening and the morning were the **fourth day**.

A few points:

- God gives His purpose for creating these celestial objects: they are to “divide the day from the night”, and they are to be for signs, seasons, days, and years. All of these functions are used to denote the concept of time – hours, days, seasons, and years. The Lord established the calendar – He instituted the day, the week, the year, and seasons. The idea of using celestial objects to chart the passage of time is established here. (It's worth noting that the Jews used a lunar calendar.)
- The Egyptians and Babylonians divided a day into 12 parts, since there were 12 lunar cycles in a year. This was later changed into 12 hours of the day and 12 hours of the night. Older cultures probably had their own way of dividing the day into smaller increments, but not much is known about them.
- The idea of dividing an hour into 60 parts and dividing those parts further into 60 parts came from the Sumerians, whose number system was sexagesimal (base 60 – or, as some have said, alternating base 10 and base 6). Some have speculated that they used a base 6 number system because they had 6 fingers on each hand.
- Verse 17 explicitly says that the Lord created the stars of the heavens, with all of their galaxies and heavenly bodies, for the express purpose of *giving light to the earth*. This planet is not one lonely sphere lost in a vast universe; the rest of the universe was created *for this planet*. It is the Earth that is special; the rest of the universe is actually there to act as a light source. This is an awesome example of the character of God: the Lord decided that Earth needed some light, and so created an *entire universe*, filled with a mind-boggling number of galaxies (*125 billion* according to recent estimates), to act as a *light source*. That is the power of God. When the Bible says that the Lord “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20), it's not kidding. The creation of the stars in space (10^{21} , by a recent estimate) is a mind-boggling array of power, but in Genesis 1 it is tossed in almost as an aside - “he made the stars also” (1:16). So when you are praying to the Lord, never forget His awesome extravagance and power – He is the one that decided the best way to light the Earth was to create *125 billion stellar galaxies*. And all of that was created in *one day*. God is not a stingy God.
- How, exactly, did the light from all of those distant stars get to Earth? We can see galaxies that are billions of light-years away, but the Earth is only 6000 years old. How is that possible?

Some have theorized that God created light already en-route to Earth. The problem with this is that light contains information – it shows things that have happened. If starlight was “pre-

created” then we would be seeing things that never actually took place. The light would essentially be lying to us, bearing record of a nonexistent past. Given the character of God, it is unlikely that He would do such a thing.

Others have theorized that the speed of light was much, much faster in the past. The problem with this theory is that the speed of light impacts the physical nature of the universe – it changes other constants of nature. (This can most easily be seen in the famous equation $E=mc^2$, or energy = mass times the speed of light squared; if you change the speed of light you change the amount of energy in mass, which impacts all sorts of things.) A changing speed of light would create all kinds of problems.

Still others have theorized that the Earth is in a “gravity well” and that time flows at a very different rate here than it does in the rest of the universe. It may be that while only a small amount of time is passing in the Solar System, incredibly long amounts of time are passing in deep space. (If this is true, it would mean that while Creation occurred 6000 years ago, billions of years could have passed in space – because time is flowing much faster in space than it is here.) Here is one explanation of how this idea would work:

Suppose that our solar system is located near the center of a finite distribution of galaxies. Although this cannot be proven for certain at present, it is fully consistent with the evidence; so it is a reasonable possibility.

In that case, the earth would be in a gravitational well. This term means that it would require energy to pull something away from our position into deeper space. In this gravitational well, we would not “feel” any extra gravity, nonetheless time would flow more slowly on earth (or anywhere in our solar system) than in other places of the universe. This effect is thought to be very small today; however, it may have been much stronger in the past. (If the universe is expanding as most astronomers believe, then physics demands that such effects would have been stronger when the universe was smaller). This being the case, clocks on earth would have ticked much more slowly than clocks in deep space. Thus, light from the most distant galaxies would arrive on earth in only a few thousand years as measured by clocks on earth. This idea is certainly intriguing. And although there are still a number of mathematical details that need to be worked out, the premise certainly is reasonable. Some creation scientists are actively researching this idea.

Day 5: On the fifth day of creation God commands the waters to bring forth aquatic animals and birds:

Genesis 1:20: “And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23 And the evening and the morning were the **fifth day.**”

Once again, notice that these creatures (and the land animals the next day) are commanded to reproduce after their own kind – the Lord did not command them to turn into entirely different creatures. There is no hint in Genesis 1 that the Lord created a simple creature and used it to evolve more complicated creatures. Instead, each animal was to reproduce “after its own kind”.

Day 6: On the sixth day of creation God commands the dry land to bring forth land animals:

Genesis 1:24: “And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding see; to you it shall be for meat.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behind, it was very good, And the evening and the morning were the **sixth day.**”

God then makes man.

- In verse 26 God says “Let us make man” – us being a plural word. This is a reference to the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- When the Lord creates man in his image, He was not referring to the physical form of the man but to the spiritual aspect – the immortal soul. We have a likeness to God that is not shared by any of the other creatures that God created on this planet.
- When mankind was created, God gave him dominion (authority) over every living thing on Earth. Mankind was instructed to fill the world, subdue it, and have dominion over it. In other words, God created this world and then gave it over to mankind to care for it. This command has never been revoked or changed. Mankind is not “just another animal”, as evolutionists would claim; we were created distinct from the animals, in the image of God, and were given authority over them. The race of men is not just another species of animals; we are something

different altogether, created by God to serve Him by caring for the Earth.

- The word “replenish” in verse 28 does not mean to “repopulate”, as if the Earth had been populated at one time and then lost its inhabitants. When the King James Bible was translated that word meant simply to “populate”. It did not have the extra connotation that it has today.
- When men and animals were created they were only given plants as food. Men (and presumably animals) were not allowed to eat meat until after the Flood (Genesis 9:1-3). This means that originally all animals (including dinosaurs) were plant-eaters. In Isaiah the Lord tells us that one day the original order will be restored and animals will once again become vegetarians (Isaiah 11:7).

Now, there are additional things that happened on this day that are not recorded in chapter 1, but *are* recorded in chapter 2. Genesis chapter 2 does not take place after the creation week; it is simply a closer look at what happened on the sixth day of creation.

The way we know this is because Exodus clearly states that in *six* days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, and everything in them. That means that all of the creating that God did was done during those six days. He rested on the seventh day because *He was done*. God did not start creating more things on day eight. Everything was completed during those six days.

There's quite a bit going on in chapter 2. First of all, there is the **Garden of Eden**:

Genesis 2:8: “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.”

When God created the garden He placed mankind inside it and changed him with dressing and keeping it:

Genesis 2:15: “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”

The phrase “Garden of Eden” refers to a garden *within the land of Eden* – specifically, in the eastern part of that country. Once the Lord had planted this garden He placed Adam in it to take care of it. As you can see, the very first profession of mankind was actually gardening.

The garden was watered by a river that parted to become four other rivers: Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. There is a modern river named Euphrates but it is not the same river that is mentioned here. The land of Eden, along with these rivers, was destroyed in the Flood. The people who lived after the Flood named some of the new rivers after the ones they remembered from the old world (just as in America, the city of “New York” was named after the old “York” in Great Britain). That is also why it is impossible to know where the garden of Eden was located – it could have been anywhere.

As a side-note, the word tenses in verses 10-14 are interesting. It is clear that when that passage was written those rivers were still in existence, since the writer is speaking in present tense, not past tense. Note that the writer comments that there *is* high-quality gold in Havilah, that a river “compasses the whole land of Ethiopia”, and so forth. It is very likely that the person who wrote those verses lived *before* the Flood and was an eyewitness to what the old world was like. In other words, what we have here is an eyewitness account of Eden.

One of the key centerpieces in the Garden was the **Tree of Life**:

Genesis 2:9: “And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

Within the garden the Lord created a great many trees - “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food” (2:9). There were also two special trees: the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. As fantastic as it seems, these were real trees with real fruit. They seem like something out of a fairy tale but they really were real trees.

Adam was forbidden to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but he was *not* forbidden to eat from the Tree of Life. The Lord later said that any man who ate of the Tree of Life would live forever (Genesis 3:22). When Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden the Lord did not destroy the Tree of Life; instead, cherubim and a flaming sword were sent to keep people away from the Tree.

The Tree of Life was not lost in the flood. Revelation tells us that this tree can be found in the New Jerusalem:

Revelation 22:2: “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

The Lord has further promised that “him that overcometh” (which are all those who have put their trust in Christ – 1 John 5:5) will have the privilege of eating the fruit from this tree (and living forever):

Revelation 2:7: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

One day, we will not only see this legendary tree, but we will enjoy its fruit!

Of course, the Garden of Eden also contained another tree – the **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**. Mankind was strictly forbidden from eating of this tree:

Genesis 2:16: “And the Lord God commandeth the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

As we all know, this tree led to the Fall of mankind.

As a side-note, in Genesis 1 the Lord said that mankind could eat of any tree, but in Genesis 2 the Lord makes an exception to this rule. This exception was not mentioned in chapter 1 because that tree was not yet in existence.

Something else we find in Genesis 2 is the **naming of the animals**:

Genesis 2:19: “And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air: and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call

them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him.”

The first recorded act of Adam was to name the animals. In the Bible, naming something is an act of authority; if you name something then you are exercising dominion over it. God sometimes changed people's names – for example, He changed Abram's name to Abraham. In this case the Lord is having Adam exercise his dominion over the animal kingdom by naming the animals.

It is worth noting that from the very beginning Adam was a fully-formed adult with the full use of his senses. He was capable of language and analysis from day one. Language did not evolve over millions of years; mankind was created with the ability to communicate.

Last but not least, we also find the account of the creation of Eve:

Genesis 2:21: “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

In Genesis 2:18 the Lord says that “it is not good that the man should be alone”. To solve this problem the Lord took a rib from Adam and created the first Woman: Eve.

It should be noted that Eve was not a “helpmeet”, as people today like to say. What the Lord said is that He would make “a help meet for him”. The word “meet” here means “suitable”. The Lord is saying that He will make someone for Adam that is well-suited to being his companion.

Also, Adam did not permanently lose a rib as a result of this operation. Ribs are unique in that if they are removed they have the ability to grow back.

Day 7: After God finished creating the world, He rested:

Genesis 2:1: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”

Q. Could Genesis 1 be recounting the creation of creatures on a planet that already existed?

A. Some people have theorized that God created the Earth long before Genesis 1 and populated it with another race of beings. A number of terrible things then happen and the planet was all but destroyed. They claim that Genesis 1 is the account of God populating the Earth for the *second* time. As evidence, they point out that in Genesis 1:1 the Earth is already there; the account of its creation is never given in

the chapter.

This theory sounds interesting but it is wrong. Exodus 20 disproves it:

Exodus 20:11: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

Notice what God claims to have created in just *six days*:

1. Heaven and Earth
2. The sea
3. Everything in heaven and earth, and everything in the sea

In other words, in those six days God created *the Earth itself* along with all the creatures that it contains. God did not use a pre-existing planet; instead He actually created the planet itself during the creation week. If God was just populating an already-existing planet He could have said “For in six days the Lord made everything in the heaven and the earth” – but *that is not what God said*. God included “heaven and earth” in the list of things that He formed during the creation week.

It is also instructive to note that the Hebrew words for “heaven and earth” in Exodus 20:11 are the same words that are used for heaven and earth in Genesis 1:1. The entire universe was created during those six days.

Q. Do Genesis chapters 1 and 2 contradict each other?

A. There are some people who claim that the first two chapters of Genesis contradict each other. For example:

Problem #1: Were plants created before man, or was man created before plants?

First, notice what Genesis 2:4 states:

Genesis 2:4: “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,
5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. ...
7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

In Genesis 1 God creates plants on day three (1:11) and man on day 6 (1:26). However, Genesis 2:7 talks about God forming man out of the ground *before* “every herb of the field” had grown. How is this possible?

The answer is actually very simple. God did indeed created plants before man. However, notice the phrase “herb of the field”. The word “field” here refers to *cultivated fields*, as opposed to normal ground. When God created man there were no cultivated fields because there *were no men around to*

cultivate them. It is as simple as that. Cultivated fields didn't exist until after Adam was created.

Problem #2: Were birds created from the water or from the ground?

In Genesis 1:20 we are told that birds came from the Seas. However, Genesis 2:19 says this:

Genesis 2:19: “And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.”

What is going on here? Why does Genesis 1 state that the birds came from the water while Genesis 2 states that birds came from the air?

This is because these two passages are talking about *different events*. In Genesis 1 God created the birds and the aquatic animals from the water on the fifth day, and God created the land animals from the ground on the sixth day.

When it came time to name the animals, however, God did not round up animals that already existed. Instead, God formed new copies of them *right out of the ground and brought them to Adam*. (That is, after all, exactly what the verse says!) That is what Genesis 2 is talking about.

Problem #3: Can mankind eat from all trees or just some trees?

In Genesis 1:29 God gives mankind the right to eat from “every tree”, yet Genesis 2:17 says this:

Genesis 2:17: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

What is the difference? Well, as was said earlier, when God spoke in Genesis 1:29 the Garden of Eden had not yet been planed and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil did not yet exist. When God planted the Garden and created that tree He instituted a new rule to cover it.

Q. Why would God create the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

A. The Bible does not give us an answer to this question but there are several possibilities. One theory is that the tree was created to demonstrate God's authority over Adam. By creating a tree and then denying mankind access to it, God was exercising His authority and right to rule. The presence of a forbidden tree was an ever-present reminder that mankind was subject to God.

The creation of the tree also offered a choice to mankind: they could now choose to obey or disobey God. If there were no commandments to break then disobedience would have been impossible.

Appendix: The Ocean in the Sky

This is one of the strangest things I have ever found in the Bible, and its implications are staggering. Until I started researching this issue I had no idea how strange Genesis 6:7 really was. This is truly a Biblical oddity – and it occurs in one of the best-known passages of the Bible. The only reason we miss it is because we're not really paying attention.

Take a look at it for yourself:

Genesis 1:6: “And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.”

Verse 7 is very straightforward: on the second day of creation God divided the waters that were under the sky *from the waters that were above the sky*. That's a bit odd, isn't it? After all, as far as we can tell there aren't any waters above the sky. That is a well-established fact and is not up for debate. There is no ocean in the sky.

Some people have suggested that the Bible is just referring to clouds. After all, clouds are made of water vapor and there is a whole lot of water vapor in the sky. That sounds like a great theory, until you get to these verses:

Genesis 1:14: “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.”

Genesis 6:7 tells us that God created the firmament to divide two great bodies of water. In this passage God puts the Sun, Moon, and stars right in the firmament itself. Since the Sun, Moon, and Stars are in the firmament, and since there is a layer of water under the firmament *and above the firmament*, that can only mean that the entire universe is actually surrounded by a layer of water. In other words, if you went to the edge of the universe and poked it, you would find an ocean.

But that's not all. Do you see the word “firm” in FIRMaMENT? The Hebrew word for “firmament” literally means something that is hard and has been beaten out (like a sheet of copper). If you don't believe me you can look it up yourself: “firmament” is Strong's #7549, and according to my Lexicon it means “broad plates which have been beaten out”. It refers to something *solid*. When God created the firmament He created a solid barrier.

Some people have said that the waters above the firmament are some kind of water canopy that used to encircle the Earth above the atmosphere. There are several problems with this theory: not only would such a canopy be a gross violation of numerous physical laws, but the Bible clearly says that the Sun, Moon, and stars are within the firmament, and that there is a body of water *above them*.

As far as the “firmament” goes – is it really so strange to think that God may have put a solid

boundary around the Universe, and that beyond that boundary might lie a vast expanse of water? I know it sounds crazy, but we need to keep in mind that this “ocean in the sky” is referenced in other Bible verses. For example:

Psalm 148:4: “Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.”

The waters above the heavens! There’s another reference to that mysterious ocean. The psalmist is clear that there are waters *above* the heavens. Just as Genesis said, these waters are literally above the stars.

This verse is also a bit odd, if you think about it:

Exodus 20:11: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

If you read Genesis 1:10 you will see that God called the waters on the Earth *Seas* – plural. This makes sense because the Earth has more than one body of water. Exodus 20:11, though, doesn’t refer to “Seas”; instead it refers to one single body of water – something that is apparently separate from the heaven and earth, since it is listed by itself. God lists the heaven, the earth, and “the sea”. That looks an awful lot like a reference to the waters that are above the firmament.

What if this firmament is actually the boundary between the Universe and the place where God lives? After all, we find a very curious “sea of glass” in the throne room of God:

Revelation 4:6: “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.”

Revelation 15:2: “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.”

How do we know that this “sea of glass” is somehow connected to the firmament? Because *that is exactly how the book of Ezekiel describes it*:

Ezekiel 1:22: “And **the likeness of the firmament** upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.”

Ezekiel tells us that the firmament *is like crystal* – and Revelation 4:6 describes the sea of glass *using that same term*.

There’s one more curious thing about this Sea that is above the firmament: one day it will be

done away with. This is what the book of Revelation has to say about it:

Revelation 21:1: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

Notice that this passage does not refer to “seas”, but to a singular Sea. Notice also the categories involved: there is the heaven, the earth, and the sea – as if the Sea is somehow separate and distinct from both.

Why would there be no more Sea? Well, consider this: right now the firmament divides the domain of God from the domain of Men. We desperately need that divider because mankind is simply not holy enough to live with God. One day, though, God will judge mankind and put a final end to sin and death. He will then remake the universe and dwell with mankind forever. When that day comes there will no longer need to be a dividing firmament or a Sea. It will have served its purpose and its time will have ended.

It's something to think about, isn't it?

THE LEVITICAL SYSTEM

In the Old Testament the nation of Israel interacted with God through the levitical priesthood. This system lasted until the death of Christ, with both fulfilled and ended that system. (I realize that the Jews continued to offer sacrifices until the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, but this was done in disobedience and unbelief; Christ's death put an end to the old system and instituted a new one.)

Since the levitical system does not apply to our lives today, why should it be studied? I think there are several key reasons:

- The levitical system was given to help the Israelites understand salvation. Hebrews 10:1 calls it an “image”. It is a beautiful picture of mankind's greatest problem and God's amazing solution. Understanding the levitical system helps us understand our own sinfulness and God's unimaginable holiness.
- When the Old Testament was written, Israel lived under the levitical system. There are some events in the Bible that are difficult to understand unless we know the context in which they took place.
- The New Testament refers extensively to the levitical system to help explain salvation. These references are lost on us if we don't understand what it is referring to.

It is impossible to cover the levitical system in any great detail in a single lesson, so I am just going to go over the highlights. This won't tell you everything that there is to know, but it will get you started.

Blood Atonement

The Bible tells us that the forgiveness of sins requires the shedding of blood:

Hebrews 9:22: “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

You see, God cannot overlook sin and sweep it under the rug. In order for sin to be forgiven *it has to be paid for*. God is just, and justice demands payment. Since the wages of sin is death, that means that in order for us to be forgiven, something has to die.

In the Mosaic Law God commanded that animals be sacrificed as payment for sins. The blood of animals would be used to make atonement. The reason that animals were used is because sins could only be paid for with the blood of an innocent party:

Leviticus 17:11: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

However, sacrificing animals was not the final answer, nor was it ever intended to be. The sacrificial system looked forward to the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God. The blood of animals was not able to pay for the sins of man:

Hebrews 10:4: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

The only way our sins could be paid for was through the blood of a man – an innocent man who had never sinned. That is why Jesus came, lived a sinless life, and died. He had to be sinless, because if He had sinned then He would be dying for His own sins, not for ours. The only way He could die in our place was if He had no sins of His own to die for. Since Jesus was sinless, He could make atonement for us with His own blood:

Hebrews 9:12: “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

The Levitical system pointed to Christ. The sacrifice of lambs looked forward to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The system was not an end of itself; it was a shadow of things to come.

Incidentally, this is also why Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved. He is the only offering that can pay for our sins, and our sins *must* be paid for in order for us to be accepted by God. It is therefore impossible to be saved apart from Jesus.

The Levites

In the Old Testament the Lord took the tribe of Levi and dedicated them to the priesthood and the service of the tabernacle. The rest of the Israelites were not allowed to serve in the tabernacle on pain of death:

Numbers 18:22: “Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.”

23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.”

The nation of Israel could not interact directly with God; instead they went through the Levites. The Levites acted as an intermediary between God and Israel. The reason this was needed was because God was holy and Israel was not. The Israelites were simply too unclean to approach God. The only way they could interact with God was if someone who was trained and set apart did it on their behalf. That was the role that the Levites played – they were set apart and trained for the service of God.

Approaching God was not something to be taken lightly. God was so holy that sinful man could not survive in His presence. Notice the strict instructions that God gave to the Israelites when they approached Mount Sinai:

Exodus 19:10: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes,

11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, to touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death:

13 There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through: whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

...

And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

20 And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

21 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.

22 And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.”

The Lord was so holy that if the people had merely gazed upon the Lord they would have died! Even just *touching* the mountain on which the Lord had come down was punishable by death. The Levites acted as a protective barrier. They knew how to cleanse themselves, how to properly offer sacrifices, and how to behave. Most importantly, though, they were directly appointed by God to be the only people who were allowed to approach Him. The priests offered sacrifices on behalf of the people, and once a year the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of the people.

As was said earlier, the entire tribe of Levi was set aside to serve God. They were responsible for maintaining the tabernacle (and later the Temple) and offering sacrifices:

Numbers 3:6: “Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.

7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.

8 And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

9 And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

10 And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on the priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.”

Since God set them apart to serve Him, they were not given any inheritance in the land of Canaan. Each tribe was given their own plot of land, but the Levites were not. This is because of their unique role. Since they had no land of their own (although God did set aside some cities for them), they were to be supported by the tithe:

Numbers 18:20: “And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.

21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.”

As verse 24 explains, the Levites were given a tithe instead of a portion of land. The Israelites gave the Levites a tenth of their produce and livestock, which the Levites needed in order to support themselves. The Levites, in turn, gave a tenth of this tithe to the priests:

Numbers 19:26: “Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up a heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe.

27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fullness of the winepress.

28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the Lord of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the Lord's heave offering to Aaron the priest.”

The priests did not give a tithe to anyone.

It should be noted that the tithe consisted of livestock and produce; it was not a monetary amount. Although there was a temple tax that was a monetary amount, that tax was separate from the tithe. God required that all Israelites pay the tithe, and when it was not paid the Lord became quite angry:

Malachi 3:8: “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Whenever Israel failed to pay the tithe they made it impossible for the Levites to continue to work in the tabernacle. This created a serious problem because the only people who could offer sacrifices were the priests. If the priests could not do their jobs then that meant no one could approach

God. It also meant that there was no one offering sacrifices for forgiveness or atoning for the sins of the people. If the priests were gone then Israel's access to God was also gone. Tithing was a very serious matter.

Although the entire tribe of Levi served God in some capacity, not everyone was charged with the same task. The role that you played depended on your lineage. Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. These men created three different lines, and each line had their own duties. The book of Numbers outlines these duties in great detail. The sons of **Gershon** were charged with maintaining the curtains of the tabernacle:

Numbers 3:24: “And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,
26 And the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the alter round about, and the cords of it for all the service thereof.”

The sons of **Kohath** were charged with taking care of the items within the tabernacle itself:

Numbers 3:31: “And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof.”

As you can see, this included the Ark of the Covenant, the altars, and the various sacrificial vessels.

The sons of **Merari** were charged with the physical structure of the tabernacle:

Numbers 3:36: “And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto,
37 And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords.”

Notice that *none* of these groups were charged with performing sacrifices. While the entire tribe of Levi was dedicated to serving in the tabernacle, the only people who could offer sacrifices were the priests. In order to be a priest you had to be a descendent of Aaron:

Numbers 3:10: “And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.”

No one else was allowed to offer sacrifices. As you can see, all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.

Besides being a descendent of Aaron, the priests also had to be physically perfect. If they had any physical defect they were not allowed to be a priest:

Leviticus 21:17: “Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their

generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God.

18 For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous,

19 Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded,

20 Or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken;

21 No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.”

They also had to be between 25 and 50 years old:

Numbers 8:23: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

24 This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation:

25 And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more:

26 But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.”

God also put restrictions on who they could marry. Priests were not allowed to marry anyone who was a widow or divorced, and they were required to marry a fellow Levite:

Leviticus 21:13: “And he shall take a wife in her virginity.

14 A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.”

Being a priest was a very honorable and important thing – but it was also very dangerous. You had to do everything right all of the time. If you stepped out of line while performing your duties then the Lord would strike you dead:

Leviticus 10:1: “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.

2 And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”

You were not allowed to improvise, change things, or do things your way. You had to do things God's way all of the time *or you died*.

Some people look at this and come to the conclusion that God was very harsh back then, but

now He's changed and is more lenient. That is not the case. You see, God never changes. The God who was so specific and demanding in the Old Testament is the very same God who rules today. God demanded complete and utter holiness in the Old Testament and God still demands that in the New Testament. He demanded complete perfection before and He still demands it now. The difference is that in the Old Testament the nation of Israel tried to live up to that standard, and they failed miserably. The truth is that no one can live up to that standard. It is impossible – and that is the whole point. The New Testament tells us that the reason God gave the Law was to show mankind that we cannot keep it. The Law was a schoolmaster to point us to Christ, the One who kept the law on our behalf.

The Law proves that we cannot come to God in our own righteousness; we are just not good enough. Thanks to Christ, however, we don't have to try to do the impossible. Instead, we now approach God with the imputed righteousness of Christ. When we are saved God credits Christ's righteousness to our account. Jesus lived and died a perfect life, and when God looks at us that is what He sees. Instead of seeing us for who we are, God sees us dressed in Christ's perfect righteousness and holiness. That makes all the difference. God still requires complete and utter perfection and holiness – but Christ accomplished that for us.

Unfortunately, there are many people who are not interested in obtaining righteousness from God. Instead they want to approach God on their own terms and try to measure up by living what they consider to be good lives. However, that approach is not going to work. God made it absolutely clear that He can only be approached His way, on His terms. The levitical system in the Old Testament tells us that our own attempts at holiness fall far short of what God requires. Christ's righteousness is the only way we will ever be able to stand before God. Nothing else will do.

When Christ came He put an end to the system of Levites. We no longer need Levites and priests to stand between us and God. Instead we have a different mediator – Christ Himself:

1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”

We can now boldly approach the throne of grace because Christ has paid the way for us. We no longer need to go to Levites in order to seek forgiveness; instead we go to Christ.

Today we no longer have Levites; instead we have pastors. Pastors are shepherds and evangelists who teach us the Word and preach the gospel. We don't go to them for forgiveness and they don't offer sacrifices on our behalf. They don't need to, because Christ has finished that work. Their job is to point us to Christ.

The Temple

When the Israelites were camped at Mount Sinai the Lord gave Moses more than just the Ten Commandments. Over a period of 40 days the Lord gave Moses hundreds of commandments. He also gave Moses the plans for the tabernacle. The tabernacle was not just a building; it was far more than that. In today's world we have churches where the people of God meet to serve and worship Him. However, God doesn't actually live in the church. The church is just a building where God's people meet.

However, God actually *did* live in the tabernacle. It was literally God's house:

Exodus 25:8: “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”

Today God dwells within us, but back then the gift of the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. (The Holy Spirit did exist but He was only with people on rare occasions. He was not with all believers all of the time, the way He is now.) In the Old Testament God actually had a street address. If you wanted to approach God you went to the Temple, because that's the place God had chosen. The sacrifices were made at the Temple. Offerings were given at the Temple. If the king wanted to ask God a question he had to go to the Temple. That was literally where God lived – He manifested His glory there.

The tabernacle was paid for by freewill offerings from the people. God told the people what items were needed for the tabernacle's construction, and people willingly gave everything that was required.

The instructions that God gave for building the tabernacle were incredibly exact. The Lord specified every detail, right down to the curtains:

Exodus 26:1: “Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them.

2 The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. . .”

These directions go on for quite some time. In the following sections we will take a look at some of the key portions of the tabernacle.

One thing to keep in mind, though, is that Christ's death changed everything. Temples and churches are two very different things. God no longer dwells in a building; instead His Spirit dwells inside us. The Temple existed so that men might go to God for things such as forgiveness (offering sacrifices) and wisdom (inquiring of God). God did not live *within* His people; instead He lived *among* them. Today, though, we can access God directly. The Bible commands us to go directly to Him for forgiveness and to pray directly to Him for wisdom. We no longer need a Temple, for our bodies *are* temples (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The Ark of the Covenant

The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the heart of the tabernacle, in the room known as the Holy of Holies. The only person who was allowed to enter that room was the High Priest, and he could only enter it once a year on the Day of Atonement. At that time he would make atonement for the people by entering the Holy of Holies and sprinkling blood on the mercy seat. The Ark was where God physically manifested His glory. When the High Priest entered the room he could actually see the glory of God (something theologians refer to as the Shekinah Glory).

God gave very precise instructions for building the **Ark of the Covenant**. It was 3.75 feet long and 2.25 feet high. The ark was made of wood and covered in pure gold:

Exodus 25:10: “And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

11 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.”

The Ark had some wooden poles that were permanently attached to it:

Exodus 25:12: “And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it.

13 And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.

14 And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.

15 The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.”

The Ark was to be transported by these wooden staves. Priests would carry the ark by lifting the wooden poles onto their shoulders. The Ark could never be touched; anyone who dared to touch it was instantly killed. There was one time when Israel tried to transport the Ark by a cart instead of by the staves. When Uzza reached out to steady the Ark, God instantly killed him:

I Chronicles 13:9: “And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

10 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.”

The mercy seat was the top portion of the Ark. If you have ever seen a picture of the Ark, it is the part that has the angels on it. This is how God described it:

Exodus 25:17: “And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.

18 And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.

19 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.

20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.

21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.”

As was said earlier, God physically manifested His glory at the mercy seat:

Exodus 25:22: “And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of

the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”

Leviticus 16:2: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.”

When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement, he was actually coming directly into contact with the glory of God. (Imagine being able to enter the Temple and physically see the glory of God!)

God commanded that the Ten Commandments be placed inside the Ark:

Exodus 25:21: “. . . in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.”

Later, God commanded that Aaron's rod be placed in the Ark (Numbers 17:10), along with a jar of manna (Exodus 16:32-33). Ultimately, though, those two items were lost, and all that remained were the tablets (2 Chronicles 5:10).

There has been a lot of speculation about where the Ark of the Covenant is currently located. Interestingly, while the Ark was in Solomon's Temple, it was not in the temple that existed during Christ's day. There are a lot of theories about where the Ark might be, but I don't think you'll find it on Earth. The book of Revelation tells us that it is in Heaven:

Revelation 11:19: “And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

Today we have no need for the Ark because Jesus – our High Priest – has already made atonement for us. As Hebrews 9:12 said, Jesus entered once into the holy place and made atonement for us with His own blood. He will never have to do that again; that work is done. As Jesus said on the cross, it is finished.

The Holy Place

As was said before, the Ark of the Covenant was in the heart of the tabernacle in a place called the Holy of Holies. The only person who was allowed to enter this small room was the High Priest, and he could only enter it once a year on the Day of Atonement. The reason he entered this room was to make atonement for the sins of Israel.

The Holy of Holies was about 15 feet wide and 15 feet long. It was separated from the holy place by a veil. It contained no artificial light, for none was needed; it was literally lit by the glory of God.

Beyond the Holy of Holies, separated by a veil, was the Holy Place. This room was 45 feet long and 15 feet wide. The priests were allowed to enter this room, but the Levites and the common people were not. Everything in this room was golden. This is where the golden lampstand, the golden

shewbread table, and the golden altar of incense was located. Although the priests worked in this area, there were no chairs; the priests were not allowed to sit down. This is because their work was never completed. When Christ atoned for our sins, however, He sat down at the right hand of God – indicating that His work was finished (Hebrew 10:11-12).

The **golden lampstand** is what lit the Holy Place where the priests worked. It was hammered from one massive piece of gold and weighed about 75 pounds. (Today this lampstand is known as the menorah, and is a famous Jewish symbol.) These are the specifications that God gave for it:

Exodus 25:31: “And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.

32 And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side:

33 Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick.

34 And in the candlesticks shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers.

35 And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick.

36 Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold.

37 And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.

38 And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold.

39 Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels.

40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.”

The lampstand had seven lamps, which burned pure olive oil:

Exodus 27:20: “And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always.”

The lampstand was to be continually lit.

The **shewbread table** was inside the Holy Place and was made of wood overlain in gold. It was 3 feet long, 1.5 feet wide, and 2.25 feet high. It had four legs and was carried by two golden poles that were inserted into gold rings. These are the specifications for it:

Exodus 25:23: “Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

24 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about.

25 And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about.

26 And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof.

27 Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table.

28 And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them.

29 And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them.

30 And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me always.”

As you can see, the table had a number of utensils on it: there were dishes, spoons (for sprinkling incense), pitchers (for liquid offerings), and bowls (which contained the incense). The purpose of this table was to hold the 12 loaves of shewbread. Each loaf symbolized one of the tribes of Israel. The loaves were made from fine flour:

Leviticus 24:5: “And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake.

6 And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord.”

The loaves were not there for decoration. Every Sabbath day new loaves were provided, and the priests were commanded to eat these holy loaves:

Leviticus 24:8: “Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

9 And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute.”

The loaves were not simply food; they were a holy offering – and like some of the other offerings, they were to be eaten by the priests.

The **golden altar** was also kept in the Holy Place. It was made of wood overlain in gold, and it was three feet tall and 1.5 feet square. The priests used it to offer incense:

Exodus 30:1: “And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it.

2 A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same.

3 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.”

Like the Ark and the table of shewbread, the altar was carried by poles that were inserted through gold rings:

Exodus 30:4: “And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal.

5 And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.”

The priests offered incense upon it every morning and every evening:

Exodus 30:7: “And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

8 And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.

9 Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.”

The commandment in verse 9 is very important. Two of Aaron's sons once offered strange incense, and the Lord killed them for it. The priests were not allowed to just offer anything that they wanted. No burnt offerings, meat offerings, or drink offerings could be offered on the altar of incense; only incense was allowed. On top of that, the priests were not allowed to offer just any kind of incense. Only a special type could be used:

Exodus 30:34: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight:

35 And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy:

36 And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.

37 And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the Lord.

38 Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.”

As you can see, no one else was allowed to make this type of incense and use it for their own purposes. It was strictly reserved for the tabernacle.

The Outer Court

Outside of the tabernacle, surrounding it, was the outer court. This is where the bronze altar was located. The courtyard was 150 feet by 75 feet; it was situated east to west, with the entrance facing

east. The common people (but not Gentiles) were allowed to enter this area.

The **bronze altar** was located in this court and is where sacrifices were offered. It was 7.5 feet square and 4.25 feet high. The altar was made of wood and overlain with brass:

Exodus 27:1: “And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits.

2 And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass.

3 And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass.

4 And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brasen rings in the four corners thereof.

5 And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar.”

When an animal was sacrificed on this altar, the priests would catch the blood in a basin and pour it out at the foot of the altar. This would make atonement for the sin, and the sinner would go home forgiven – but as soon as they sinned again they would have to come and make another sacrifice. Since the people constantly sinned, that meant that sacrifices had to be continually offered.

Once a year (on the Day of Atonement) a sacrifice was made for the sins of the High Priest. After his sins were atoned for he would go into the Holy of Holies and make atonement for the sins of the people.

One of the magnificent things about the sacrifice of Christ is that His one sacrifice completed the atonement for all of our sins. No other sacrifice will ever be needed. Israel had to continually offer sacrifices for their sins, but Christ offered Himself once and finished the task (Hebrews 7:27).

As a side-note, verse 2 speaks of the horns of the altar. In the Bible horns are symbolic of power. When animals were sacrificed on the altar they were tied to those horns. The horns did serve another purpose, however. If someone was falsely accused of murder they could take refuge by fleeing to the tabernacle and grabbing the horns of the altar:

1 Kings 1:50: “And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.”

If he was innocent then God commanded that he be spared, but if he was guilty then he was to be taken away and killed.

The Urim and the Thummim

In the Old Testament the Lord gave His people a unique way to communicate with Him. The High Priest was given something that was called the Urim and the Thummim:

Exodus 28:30: “And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually.”

The Urim and the Thummim apparently went into the High Priest's breastplate. No one knows exactly what they were or how they worked. All we know is that they were used to inquire of God:

1 Samuel 27:6: “And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.”

Ezra 2:63: “And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.”

As you might imagine, this ability to ask God questions and get back direct answers was very useful, and throughout the Bible various kings used it. However, this form of communication with God only appears in the Old Testament. Today the Urim and the Thummim are gone, and God has replaced it with something else: the Bible. The Scriptures contain everything that we need:

2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

We no longer need to go through a priest in order to discover God's will. The apostle Paul tells us that the Bible contains enough information to furnish us unto *all* good works. In other words, it contains *everything* that we need to know in order to serve God during this part of history. We do not need any additional divine revelation; the Bible is enough.

There is a great deal more that can be said about the levitical system, but since time is short I will bring this paper to a close. If you would like to learn more about the levitical system then take a look at the book of Hebrews. That book offers an amazing look at how the sacrificial system pointed to Christ, who both fulfilled and ended it.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

In the Old Testament there are many prophecies that speak about a coming Messiah who would save mankind from their sins. These prophecies (which date back to hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of years before Christ) foretell in great detail what the Messiah was going to be like and what He was going to do. The extent of these prophecies are quite astonishing and provide amazing evidence that Jesus really is the Messiah. It is not an easy thing to predict what is going to happen next week, let alone next year – but to predict things that will happen a thousand years from now, with extreme precision, goes far beyond a series of simple “lucky guesses”. The fact is that Jesus really is the promised Messiah! He fulfilled all of the prophecies perfectly – including being executed and then raising back to life again.

This paper isn't intended to be an exhaustive study of all messianic prophecies. Instead what I'd like to do is present a number of prophecies from the Old Testament that speak of the person and work of the Messiah. As you will see, God was *very* clear about what the Messiah was going to be like. This makes it possible to recognize Him for what He really is, and tell Him apart from all imposters. There is only one man who meets all of these requirements, and that is Jesus.

I. His Person

1. He would be a descendant of Abraham

One of the first prophecies about the coming Messiah was that He would be a descendant of Abraham:

Genesis 22:15: “And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

The book of Galatians links this prophecy to Christ:

Galatians 3:16: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

It is important to note that verse 18 says “in thy *seed* all the nations of the Earth” would be

blessed. The word “seed” is actually *singular* and refers to a single person. God was telling Abraham that he would have a descendent that would be a blessing to all nations. This descendent was the Messiah, who would go on to be a blessing to all nations by saving them from their sins through His death on the cross.

2. He would be from the Tribe of Judah

Besides being a descendant of Abraham, the Messiah would also come from the tribe of Judah:

Genesis 49:10: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

This means that the Messiah was going to be Jewish, and would come from a specific Jewish tribe. The word “Shiloh” is difficult to translate and literally means “whose right it is”. The Messiah is the one who has the right to rule. This verse could be rephrased to read like this:

“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes whose right it is, and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.”

This teaches us several things. First, the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Second, the Messiah would be a king. Third, the Messiah would come before the tribe of Judah lost its identity. When the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, the genealogical records were destroyed as well. It is now impossible to tell the tribe of Judah apart from the rest of the tribes; with the destruction of the records, all of the tribes have lost their identities. Therefore, the Messiah had to come before the records were destroyed in 70 AD. No Messiah could appear after that date.

Jesus *was* born of the tribe of Judah, and He was born decades before 70 AD – just as the prophecies foretold. One day He will return and reign as the King of Kings from Jerusalem. In that day He will rule over the nations, and all the peoples of the world will serve Him.

3. He would be a son of David

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come out of the line of Jesse:

Isaiah 11:1: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord;”

Jeremiah further prophesied that He would come from the house of David:

Jeremiah 23:5: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Jesus fulfills both of these requirements. The genealogical records in the New Testament prove that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and the offspring of David.

4. He would be both God and man

The Bible is clear that the Messiah would be both God and man. This can be found in a host of passages: Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 12:10, Zechariah 13:7, Psalm 80:17, and Psalm 110:1-7. For example:

Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Jesus was not just a man; He was also God as well – part of the eternal Trinity. Jesus really *is* the “mighty God”, as Isaiah foretold. He was fully God and fully man at the same time.

5. He will live eternally

The prophet Nathan told King David that the Messiah would come from one of David's children and that His throne would last forever:

I Chronicles 17:10: “And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that the Lord will build thee an house.

11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

12 He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne forever.

13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away

from him, as I took it from him that was before thee:

14 But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever: and his throne shall be established forevermore.”

This cannot be talking about Solomon because Solomon's throne did not last forever. The throne of the Messiah, however, is an eternal one that will never fade away. He will rule for all of eternity.

II. His Nature

1. He would be full of the Holy Spirit

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be full of the Holy Spirit:

Isaiah 42:1: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”

This passage is quoted in Matthew 12:15-21 and is applied to Jesus. He was indeed full of the Holy Spirit, and He did many mighty miracles.

2. He would be humble

Zechariah prophesied that the Messiah would be humble:

Zechariah 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.”

This passage is quoted in Matthew 21:4-5 and is applied to Jesus.

3. He would be gentle

The book of Isaiah tells us that the Messiah would be gentle:

Isaiah 42:3: “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.”

4. He would be the son of God

The Old Testament was clear that the Messiah would not just be the son of man, but would also be the Son of God:

Psalms 2:7: “I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

This passage is quoted and applied to Jesus in Acts 13:33.

5. He would be the Good Shepherd

This can be seen in a number of places, one of which is in Zechariah:

Zechariah 13:7: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”

This passage is quoted and applied to Jesus in Matthew 26:31.

III. His Appearing

1. He would be born of a virgin

This can be seen in the famous passage in Isaiah:

Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

There are some who claim that the word “virgin” in this verse doesn't actually mean virgin. That is incorrect. In fact, the Hebrew word used here is the only one available that even *could* mean virgin; none of the other words that Isaiah could have used had that possible meaning. There simply is no Hebrew word that *only* means virgin, and Isaiah used the best one available.

However, the Bible makes it clear that this was a virgin birth in two ways. First, when this verse is quoted in Matthew 1:23, the Greek word used to translate Isaiah 7:14 explicitly means virgin. Second, in verse 14 we can see that this is intended to be a sign. There is nothing miraculous about a young woman giving birth to a child; that happens all the time. This verse only becomes miraculous if a *virgin* was to conceive and bear a son.

2. He would be preceded by a herald

The Bible teaches that before the Messiah came someone else would come to tell the world that the Messiah was about to appear. This was prophesied by Isaiah:

Isaiah 40:3: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

Malachi also mentions this:

Malachi 3:1: “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.”

These verses are applied to John the Baptist in John 1:23.

3. He would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David

This can be seen in Micah:

Micah 5:2: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.”

This passage is quoted in Matthew 2:5-6. The reason the passage mentions Bethlehem-Ephratah is because there were two Bethlehems in Israel, and God was specifying which one the Messiah was going to come from.

4. He would be seen riding on a donkey

This can be seen in the book of Zechariah:

Zechariah 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”

5. He would appear before 70 AD

As was mentioned earlier, the Old Testament was very specific that the Messiah was going to be of the tribe of Judah and of the lineage of David. However, the genealogical records were stored in the Temple in Jerusalem, and they were all destroyed when the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 70 AD. At that point the identity of the tribes were lost, which made it impossible for there to be a tribe of Judah. The Messiah had to come before that point because it was impossible to come afterward. After all, He could not come of the tribe of Judah if there was no longer a tribe of Judah!

IV. His Offices

1. He would be a king

This can be seen in many passages:

Genesis 49:10: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people

be.”

Numbers 24:17: “I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. ...

19 Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.”

Isaiah 9:7: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

I Chronicles 17:14: “But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever: and his throne shall be established forevermore.”

See also Psalm 2:7-12, Psalm 110:1-7.

2. He would be a priest

It was also prophesied that the Messiah would be a priest. This can be found in Psalms:

Psalm 110:4: “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Melchizedek appears in Genesis 14:17-24. His priesthood, and its relevance to Christ, is discussed in Hebrews 5, 6, and 7.

3. He would be a prophet

The third office of the Messiah was that of a prophet:

Deuteronomy 18:15: The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken ...

18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”

V. His Mission and Ministry

1. He would be specially trained

In one of the “Servant Songs” of Isaiah, the Bible hints that the Messiah was specially trained by God for His mission:

Isaiah 50:4: “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.”

2. He would bring salvation to the Gentile nations

This can be found in Isaiah:

Isaiah 42:1: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. ...

6: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;”

Isaiah 49:6: “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

3. He would be rejected at first

This can be seen in many passages: Isaiah 49:1-13, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Zechariah 11:1-17, Zechariah 12:10, Psalm 22, Psalm 110:1-7. For example:

Isaiah 53:3: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

4. He would appear to fail but would actually be successful

The Old Testament was clear that although the Messiah would be rejected and would suffer greatly (as was seen in point #3), He would not fail in His mission:

Isaiah 42:4: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

5. He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver

This was prophesied by Zechariah:

Zechariah 11:12: "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.
13 And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Matthew records that Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16) and that the silver was used to purchase the potter's field (Matthew 27:3-10). It should be noted that the Lord was being sarcastic when He called the amount a "goodly price"; Exodus 21:32 records that 30 pieces of silver was the amount required to repay for a dead slave. That was the "goodly price" that was put on the Son of God.

6. His rejection would result in an attack upon Israel and the scattering of the people

This can be found in the book of Zechariah:

Zechariah 13:7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.
8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.
9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

Jesus applied this prophecy to Himself in Matthew 26:31. In 70 AD the Roman army attacked the land of Israel, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and slaughtered more than a million people. Jesus had warned in Matthew 23:35-6 that the generation alive at that time would face severe

judgment. Since they rejected their Messiah, their house was left desolate (Matthew 23:38).

In Luke 21:20-24 Jesus warned His followers to flee from Jerusalem when they saw it being besieged by armies. In 66 AD the Romans came and besieged the city. When they temporarily eased the siege later that year the entire Christian community in Jerusalem abandoned the city and left. In 68 AD the Romans besieged it again, and in 70 AD they leveled the city and the Temple. No stone of the Temple was left on top of the other. The reason for this was because when the Temple burned down the gold that covered its walls melted and ran down into the cracks, so the Romans were forced to tear it apart stone by stone to recover the gold.

7. He would eventually be accepted

This can be seen in Isaiah 49. The theme of that chapter is that Israel has not been forgotten; the day will come when it will be restored.

8. He would be seated at the right hand of God

This can be seen in Psalm 110:

Psalm 110:1: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

This passage is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 22:41-45.

VI. His Suffering and Death

1. He would suffer

This can be seen in a number of different passages. Both Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52-3 go into great detail about the Messiah's sufferings. A few of these verses are:

Psalm 22:1: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? . . .

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

Isaiah 52:13: “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: . . .

53:5: But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

2. He would be tried and condemned to death

Isaiah speaks of this:

Isaiah 53:7: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

Notice it says that he was “taken from prison and from judgment”, which implies a trial and imprisonment. It also says that he was “cut off out of the land of the living”, which speaks of the Messiah's execution. The passage adds that “he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth” - speaking of the way the Messiah would conduct Himself at the trial.

3. He would die

This can be seen in Isaiah 53:8, where it says that the Messiah would be cut off “out of the land of the living”. This is also spoken of in Psalms:

Psalms 16:9: “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

The word “hell” here is Sheol, which simply refers to the grave or the resting place of the dead. If the Messiah's soul is in the grave then the Messiah is obviously dead – and as we saw in Isaiah, the reason the Messiah was dead was because He was executed. At the same time, verse 10 says that the Messiah would not stay in the grave for long. In fact, verse 10 says He would not even be in the grave long enough for His body to start decaying.

4. He would die a violent death by means of piercing

This can be seen in Zechariah:

Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

5. His death would be substitutionary

This can be seen in Isaiah 53:5:

Isaiah 53:5: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

Notice how the verse says that the Messiah would be wounded and beaten for *our* sins. He was not punished for what He did but for what we had done.

6. His death would result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple

This is mentioned in Daniel:

Daniel 9:26: “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

As we can see, after the Messiah is “cut off” (or executed, but “not for himself” – His death was substitutionary) the city and the sanctuary would both be destroyed. In this context, the city was Jerusalem and the sanctuary was the Temple. Both of these were destroyed after the Messiah was executed.

7. He would be buried in a rich man's tomb

Isaiah speaks of this:

Isaiah 53:9: “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”

8. He would be resurrected

This is hinted at in a number of passages but it can be most clearly seen in Psalm 16:10:

Psalm 16:10: “ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

As we've pointed out before, the word translated “hell” is actually Sheol, which simply speaks of the resting place of the dead. If the Messiah's soul was not going to be left in the grave then that means that He would be raised back to life – and if His body was not going to see corruption then He wasn't going to be in the grave long enough to start decaying.

9. He would bring justification to those who believe in Him

This can be seen in Isaiah 53:

Isaiah 53:11: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

RULES OF INTERPRETATION

These days people interpret the Bible in many different ways. The reason for this is because people come up with their own methods for interpreting the Scriptures. Unfortunately, many of these methods are wrong. There actually *is* a right way and a wrong way to interpret the Bible. After all, if people were allowed to interpret it however they wanted then any verse could be interpreted to say anything. At that point the Bible would become utterly meaningless – it would be like putty that could be pushed into any shape imaginable.

When people read a contract they interpret it in a fixed, standard way. No one believes that they have the right to interpret the contract however they think best. If six people interpret one clause of the contract in six different ways then that is seen as a serious problem, not a feature. Likewise, there is a right way and a wrong way to interpret the Scriptures. Each verse means something in particular. It does *not* mean whatever you want it to mean. Our job as Christians is to understand what the Bible *actually* means, not to reinterpret it to say what *we* want it to say.

A complete discussion on how to interpret the Bible is more than I want to tackle at this time. However, I do want to offer four rules that, if followed, will make it much easier to discover what the Bible actually teaches.

The rules are:

1. If plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.

What this means is that if the Scripture can be taken literally then it *should* be taken literally. A symbolic or “spiritual” interpretation should *only* be used when a literal interpretation makes no sense, or when the passage is clearly symbolic.

For example, Joshua 8:28 says this:

Joshua 8:28: “And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap forever, even a desolation unto this day.

29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcass down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.”

If this passage is interpreted literally then it makes a great deal of sense: it records the destruction of the city of Ai and the death of its king. Since the passage makes sense when interpreted literally then it *should* be interpreted literally.

If this rule is ignored and these verses are interpreted “spiritually” (or allegorically) then the passage can literally mean anything. For example, someone could say “Well, Joshua is an allegory that represents the forces of good, and Ai symbolically represents the forces of evil. Since Joshua defeated Ai, that means the forces of good will defeat the forces of evil. Since Ai was burned, that means the forces of evil will be burned by the judgment of God. This passage therefore teaches that good will triumph over evil.”

That kind of Biblical interpretation is total nonsense. If you take that approach then you can force any passage of the Bible to mean anything that you want it to mean. At that point the verses lose all meaning; they become a blank slate. This violates one of the prime directives of Scripture:

2 Peter 1:20: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.”

Scripture does *not* mean arbitrarily different things to different people. *It has the same meaning for everyone.* If you are interpreting a verse in such a way that the verse can mean anything then you are interpreting it wrong.

2. Interpret Scripture with Scripture

When the Bible does speak symbolically, the symbols that it uses *must* be interpreted by *other passages within the Bible*. It is *never* acceptable to just assign one's own meaning to the symbol. Moreover, the Scripture usually interprets a given symbol consistently, so if a symbol has a certain meaning in one passage then it almost always has that same meaning in all other passages as well. For example, oil is usually symbolic of the Holy Spirit and leaven is usually symbolic of sin. If the symbol is being used in a different way then the Bible will note the difference and offer an explanation.

For an example of how to interpret Biblical symbolism, take a look at Revelation 1:12-13:

Revelation 1:12: “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;
13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”

This passage mentions seven golden candlesticks. Some people might assign their own definition to that symbol and say that, to them, candlesticks represent light shining in the darkness, or a beacon of hope in a sea of despair, or any number of things. However, *the Bible defines its own terms*. If you want to find out what it means then you must search the Word of God for the definition. It is wrong to arbitrarily assign your own meaning to Biblical symbols, because doing so ignores the Bible's own definitions and leads to incorrect interpretations.

In this case, the definition of the candlestick symbol is found just a few verses further down in the chapter:

Revelation 1:20: “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

So then, we can see that the seven candlesticks represent seven churches. If we had interpreted that symbol to suit ourselves then we would have been in error. A great many people interpret Revelation incorrectly because *they do not use other Bible passages to interpret its symbolism*. Revelation does have a lot of symbolic language, but the language it uses is explained in other passages. Instead of doing their homework, though, people are content to assign their own meanings to

the symbols that they find, and the result is chaos and error.

3. Context is everything

When reading the Bible it is very important to keep the context in mind. Verses in the Bible do not float in space all by themselves; they are found in passages and in books and were given to specific people at specific times. In order to understand what the verse is teaching you must know both the textual context and the historical context.

The textual context is *extremely* important to understanding what is going on. For example, take this passage in 2 Kings. In this passage an Assyrian by the name of Rab-shakeh was talking to the Israelites and urging them to surrender. During his speech he said this:

2 Kings 18:22: “But if ye say unto me, We trust in the Lord our God: is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?”

Rab-shakeh is wrong: the high places and altars Hezekiah had destroyed were an abomination to God and had been used to serve the false gods of the Canaanites. However, to understand that you have to have read other parts of the Bible and understand what it means when it talks about high places. In this verse the Bible is accurately reporting Rab-shakeh *lies*. However, the only way to discover this is to be familiar with the whole story.

Another example can be found in the book of John. In the seventh chapter the chief priests and Pharisees are arguing with Nicodemus about Jesus. During this discussion one of the Pharisees says this:

John 7:52: “They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”

In this passage the Pharisees make two mistakes. First, Jesus did not come from Galilee; He was born in Bethlehem. Second, there was indeed a prophet that came out of Galilee: Jonah, who is actually quite famous. However, in order to know this you have to be familiar with other portions of the Scripture. If you only look at this one verse you will come away with the mistaken interpretation that Jesus was from Galilee and that no prophets had ever come from that area. The verse must be taken in context in order to understand what is going on. This does take a lot of work – but no one ever said it was going to be easy. If you want to understand what the Bible *actually* means then you are going to have to invest a lot of time into it.

The **cultural context** is also very important. The Bible was written to specific people who lived at a specific time, and it assumes that those who are reading it have the knowledge of its original intended audience. The book of Ephesians, for example, was written to a specific group of people that lived in Ephesus. Some pieces of knowledge were taken for granted; after all, if you lived there then you would know what was going on, so there was no need for big explanations. If we do not understand the culture then we will form erroneous conclusions.

For example, take this passage in Revelation:

Revelation 2:17: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

To us the gift of a white stone has no particular meaning. However, in ancient times if you were tried for a crime and found not guilty you were given a white stone. The stone signified that the charges against you had been dropped. When Christ offers to give “him that overcometh” a white stone, He is saying that He will find them *not guilty* of their sins and will declare them innocent. The entire meaning of the white stone becomes lost if we do not understand the cultural background.

4. Mind the gaps

Sometimes in Scripture, especially in prophecies, there are gaps. A single verse may cover two entirely different periods of time, but the verse itself will not indicate that there is a gap between the first and second part of the prophecy.

For example, take this passage in Luke:

Luke 4:16: “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your years.”

Jesus quoted from the prophet Isaiah. However, if we look at the passage that Jesus quoted we will find something interesting:

Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;”

In Isaiah we can see that Christ stopped at a comma in verse two. Only the first part of the prophecy – up to the comma – was fulfilled. The rest of the prophecy is still in the future. In Isaiah 61

there is no hint that a vast amount of time separates the “acceptable year of the Lord” and the “day of vengeance of our God”, but yet that is the case.

In order to find these gaps we must be very careful with the Scripture. The gaps can be found by taking passages that deal with the same subject and comparing them with each other. As the pieces of the puzzle are fit together, it will become obvious that there are gaps, or that one passage includes details that are omitted in the other. In order to get a complete picture we must use all of the pieces.

SABBATH KEEPING

Many people today believe that the Bible commands Christians to not work on Sunday. However, is that actually the case? Does the Bible really require believers to set aside Sunday as a day of rest?

Before we answer this question let's take a look at some background information. At the time of Moses the Lord commanded the Israelites to honor the Sabbath day:

Exodus 20:8: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

First of all, it's important to notice that the Sabbath day was the *seventh* day of the week. God was very clear about this: the reason He “hallowed” the *last* day of the week was because He created the entire world in six days and then rested on the seventh day. This means that the Sabbath is Saturday, not Sunday. *There has never been a commandment to rest on the first day of the week.* This means that our act of resting on the first day of the week has nothing whatsoever to do with this commandment. As Christians we do not have the liberty to take God's commands and say “Well, we'll just honor a different day of the week and call it the same thing”. There is not one verse in the Bible that says the Sabbath was somehow changed or moved to a different day of the week.

The reason Christians gather on Sunday to worship is to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, who rose from the dead on the first day of the week. It has nothing to do with keeping the Sabbath.

However, there is something else that should not be overlooked. This command was given as a sign between God and the Israelites. In other words, this commandment was specific to *the Jews*, not to all of mankind. It never applied to Gentiles. That is made clear in this passage:

Exodus 30:13: “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.

14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefor; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

Notice that three times in this passage the Lord clearly says that this command applies *to the children of Israel*. This was not said about the commandment to honor your parents, or not murder, or not commit adultery, or not steal. It would have been easy for the Lord to say that this commandment applies to everyone or to all those who love Him, but that's not what He said. He went through great pains to make it clear that this command only applies *to the Jews*.

The commandment was also extremely strict. Anyone who did any work at all on the seventh day of the week (which would be our Saturday, *not* our Sunday) was to be put to death. In other passages the Bible elaborated on what was meant by not being allowed to work:

Jeremiah 17:21: “Thus saith the Lord; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;
22 Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.”

In this passage the Lord commanded the Israelites to bear no burdens on the Sabbath. Don't go about your normal business, don't carry things into the city, and don't even carry things out of your house. In another passage the Bible goes even further:

Exodus 35:3: “Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.”

Notice that there is no exception made for winter weather! The Jews were not allowed to even *start a fire* in their own homes on the Sabbath. Even gathering sticks on the Sabbath to start a fire was punishable by death:

Numbers 15:32: “And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day.
33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.
34 And they put in in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.
35 And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.
36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.”

Simply put, you were not allowed to do *any* kind of work *whatsoever* on the Sabbath. Now it is true that in the New Testament Jesus explained that the commandment was not intended to prevent people from helping each other. The Lord healed a number of people on the Sabbath, which angered the Pharisees a great deal. But any kind of work at all – even something as mundane as starting a fire – was strictly prohibited on pain of death.

People today do not even come close to keeping this commandment. Not only do they rest on the wrong day (typically Saturday is very busy day filled with work!), but even when they rest they do all kinds of activities that would have gotten them *executed* in Old Testament days.

Another thing to notice is that the commandment says nothing about worship services, or going to the Temple, or anything of that nature. This was not a day where the Israelites set aside what they

were doing so they could go to the Temple and offer sacrifices. Over and over the Lord says that He wants the Jews to keep the day holy *by not working*, not by singing hymns or listening to priests.

As a side-note, the Sabbath was not the only holy day in the Jewish calendar. Leviticus 23 gives an entire list of days that the Jews were commanded to keep holy. The Sabbath is simply the one that we are the most familiar with. The Jews were required to keep *all* of the various Sabbaths on their calendar. As Gentiles we are required to keep *none* of them.

If you search the New Testament you will find that many of the Ten Commandments are repeated and given to the Church. However, one commandment that is *not* given to the Church is the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. In fact, the idea of the Sabbath can only be found in *one* of the epistles to the churches. This is what it says:

Colossians 2:16: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:
17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

Notice that this verse says that we aren't to judge each other on the basis of whether or not we keep certain holy days or Sabbath days. In other words, *it is left up to our discretion* what days we do or do not keep holy. This is a very far cry from executing someone for gathering sticks! In case we missed the point, the same idea can be found in Romans:

Romans 14:5: “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.
6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and give God thanks.

...

10 But why doest thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”

Far from teaching that Christians must not work on Saturday, these verses say that Christians have liberty to do as they think best. If they want to abstain from eating meat then they may do so; if they want to eat meat then that is fine as well. If one man wants to keep a particular day holy then that is fine; if another man wants to not keep any day holy then that is equally fine. This is *not at all* what you would expect the Scriptures to say if working on the Sabbath was a sin. You will not find any passages that teach that we have the same liberty to steal, covet, lust, commit adultery, and so forth. All of those commands are still binding – but the one to honor the Sabbath day is not.

As a final note, some might point out that Jesus kept the Sabbath, and that is quite true. However, Jesus also kept the *entire* Mosaic law. The reason He did this is because He was under that law and was required to keep it. The Mosaic Law did not pass away until after He died. If the New Testament church was required to keep the Sabbath then one would expect that to be mentioned somewhere in the epistles. However, what we actually find is something entirely different. The Church is simply not required to keep the Sabbath day holy.

In summary, the law to keep the Sabbath was given only to the Jews and never applied to the Gentiles. As Christians we do not have to keep Saturday holy by not working on that day. God has given us the liberty to keep days holy or not, at our discretion. If we wish to honor God by setting aside

a day of rest then we may do so, but if we do not then it is not a sin. What the Bible does say (in Romans 14:10) is that we should not judge each other on the basis of Sabbath keeping.

THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

The sacrificial system was a key component of the Mosaic Law. Entire chapters of the Bible are dedicated to the regulations that surround sacrifices, and they played a key role in the day-to-day life of ancient Israel. Today, however, most Christians know almost nothing about the sacrificial system. Since we no longer need to sacrifice lambs and goats in our quest for holiness, we have come to ignore this entire facet of the Bible.

However, ignoring the sacrificial system creates its own set of problems. Some parts of the Old Testament are very difficult to understand without a good working knowledge of sacrifices. People usually assume that all sacrifices were the same, but that is not the case. There were actually different types of sacrifices, and they accomplished different things. Once you understand the purpose of each type of sacrifice it will be easier to understand what the Bible is saying. In fact, entire passages will take on new meaning. It is vital for Christians to understand this system – and the more we understand it, the better we will understand the sacrifice that Christ made for us.

Instead of going into great detail about every single sacrifice that is mentioned in the Bible, I'm going to give a high-level overview of the six different types of sacrifices. Of these six types, only two of them dealt with sin and forgiveness – but all six dealt with one's relationship with God.

These six types fall into three major categories:

Offerings of commitment: burnt offering, meat offering, drink offering.

Offerings of communion: peace offering.

Offerings of cleansing: sin offering, guilt offering.

Commitment Offerings

One of the three basic categories of offerings are the commitment offerings. These offerings were focused on expressing one's commitment and dedication to God. They were *not* designed to obtain forgiveness for sins. If you sinned you were supposed to offer a *cleansing* offering, not a commitment offering. (Cleansing offerings will be discussed later.)

The first type of commitment offering was the **burnt offering**. In that offering, an animal was sacrificed in order to express a person's dedication to God. These offerings were given voluntarily and had nothing to do with atoning for sin. The regulations that governed burnt offerings varied depending on the type of animal that was being offered. In the burnt offering one could offer a bull, a sheep, a goat, or a bird. Different regulations governed the sacrifice of each type of animal, but they all had to be a male and without a blemish of any kind. (In other words, they had to offer a perfect sacrifice.)

These are the regulations that governed the offering of a bull:

Leviticus 1:2: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock.

3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord.

4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

5 And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

6 And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces.

7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire:

8 And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar:

9 But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord."

To perform the offering, the person who brought the animal would kill it (yes, the person had to kill it themselves), and the priest would sprinkle its blood around the bronze altar that was in the outer courtyard of the tabernacle. The person would then cut the animal into pieces and the priests would take those pieces and place them into the fire to be consumed. After the animal had been burned its ashes were taken to a ceremonially clean place outside the camp; they were not thrown away because they were too holy.

In the ritual of the burnt offering, the person who was offering the animal was commanded to place his hand on the animal's head. This signified that the animal represented them, and it transferred their sin and guilt to the animal (even though this was not a sin or guilt offering). By doing this they were telling God that just as the animal was completely consumed in the fire, they were likewise completely giving themselves over to Him.

The fire in which the offerings were burned was kept burning continually. It is possible that the original spark that started the fire was provided by God Himself.

One striking example of a burnt offering can be found in 2 Chronicles:

2 Chronicles 1:1: "And Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly.

2 Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers.

3 So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. ...

6 And Solomon went up thither to the brasen altar before the LORD, which was at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.

7 In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee."

If you are not familiar with the sacrificial system then it is easy to read this passage and think that Israel had gathered to confess their sins. However, verse 6 tells us that Solomon offered *burnt*

offerings. The burnt offering was an offering of *dedication*, not an offering for sin. What Solomon actually did was gather the entire nation together (including all of its leadership) and offer sacrifices that expressed their dedication to God. Solomon was telling God that all of Israel was going to follow Him. They were wholly committing themselves to following the Lord – and after they did that, God appeared to Solomon and asked him what he wanted.

Do you see how important it is to understand the sacrificial system? Once you realize the significance behind burnt offerings, the entire passage comes into focus. When reading the Old Testament it is very important to remember that burnt offerings are offerings of dedication. If you keep that fact in mind you'll be surprised at how many passages it illuminates.

The **meal offering** was another type of commitment offering, but flour was offered instead of an animal. (This offering is also called the “meat offering”, even though no meat was involved. A long time ago the word “meat” simply meant “food”.) This offering could never be given by itself; it had to be accompanied by an animal sacrifice. While this may seem strange, it actually makes sense if you think about it. After all, if your sin hasn't been atoned for then anything else you offer God will not be accepted. You can only approach God and offer your gifts *after* your sins have been forgiven.

There are several different types of meal offerings; they varied, depending on the ingredients of the offering. One type of offering is described here:

Leviticus 2:1: “And when any will offer a meat offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon:
2 And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests: and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord:
3 And the remnant of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the Lord made by fire.”

This offering is treated differently from the burnt offering. In the burnt offering the entire animal was burned and its ashes were then taken outside the camp and placed in a designated area. In the meal offering, however, the priests only burned a handful of flour (the memorial portion for the Lord). The rest of it was given to the priests, who were commanded to eat it in the Holy Place of the tabernacle.

There is some important symbolism present in the meal offering. The frankincense that is burned represents prayer:

Psalms 141:2: “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”

Revelation 5:8: “And when he had taken the book, the four breasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.”

It's also worth noting that Jesus claimed to be the Bread of Life, the very thing that was being offered in the meal offering:

John 6:35: “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

The meal offering had to be accompanied by oil (either poured on it or mingled with it) and it had to include salt, both of which can be seen as representing portions of Christ's work. Christians, after all, are called to be the salt of the earth, and in the Bible oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

Leaven and honey could not be included in the meal offering (Lev. 2:11):

Leviticus 2:11: “No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire.”

In the Bible leaven always represents sin. You would certainly not want to include sin in your offering to the Lord! (As far as I can tell, the reason honey was restricted was because it has the ability to act like leaven.)

There is also the **drink offering**, which is very similar to the meal offering except that it consisted of wine instead of flour. Although the meal offering was consumed by the priests, it is important to note that the priests did *not* drink the wine. Instead the entire amount was poured out onto the altar. Like the other commitment offerings, this offering symbolized being poured out in dedication to the Lord.

The sacrifice of Christ fulfilled the dedication offering. The Bible tells us that He was poured out:

Psalms 22:14: “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

Isaiah 53:12: “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Interestingly, the Bible calls us to be living sacrifices, *dedicated* to Him:

Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

That is indeed our “reasonable service”.

Communion Offerings

Communion offerings were also called fellowship offerings. Whereas commitment offerings expressed one's dedication to God and cleansing offerings were offered to obtain forgiveness,

communion offerings were about fellowship – fellowship with God and with man. Communion offerings were offered to express thanksgiving, to perform a vow, or simply as a freewill offering. If you wanted to show God that you were grateful for a blessing then you would come to the Temple and offer a communion offering.

When a burnt offering was offered, the entire animal was consumed in the fire. Communion offerings, though, were quite different. While a small portion of the animal was still burned, a large part of it was given to the priests to eat and the rest was eaten by the family who offered it. This meant that part of the animal was offered as a sacrifice and the rest became a meal. In the Middle East meals held a special significance. Having dinner with someone meant that you were ending hostilities with them. It made the person you were dining with your friend and it demonstrated unity.

As a side-note, the Jews did not usually eat their animals because they were too valuable. Eating a dinner of meat (which, of course, you would do when you offered a peace offering) would have been a special occasion.

The only communion offering was the **peace offering**. Compared to other types of sacrifices, the regulations governing peace offerings were very relaxed. Other offerings required a male animal, but with peace offerings a female animal was acceptable. Other offerings required a perfect animal, but with peace offerings you were allowed to sacrifice animals that had blemishes.

Peace offerings could consist of either animals or bread. One example of the regulations surrounding peace offerings can be found in this passage:

Leviticus 7:11: “And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he shall offer unto the Lord.

12 If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and the unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried.

13 Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings.

14 And of it he shall offer one out of the whole oblation for a heave offering unto the Lord, and it shall be the priest's that sprinkleth the blood of the peace offerings.”

The offering was to be eaten that day. The only exception was in the case of vows, where the remainder could be eaten the next day. Anything that still remained on the third day could not be eaten:

Leviticus 7:15: “And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning.

16 But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten:

17 But the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire.

18 And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.”

If any part of the offering touched something that was unclean, that part had to be burned instead of eaten:

Leviticus 7:19: “And the flesh that toucheth any unclean thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire: and as for the flesh, all that be clean shall eat thereof.”

Also, no one who was unclean was allowed to eat of this offering. The penalty for taking part in a peace offering when you were unclean was very severe:

Leviticus 7:20: “But the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.

21 Moreover the soul that shall touch any unclean thing, as the uncleanness of man, or any unclean beast, or any abominable unclean thing, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which pertain unto the Lord, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.”

An example of peace offerings can be found in the book of 1 Kings. When Solomon dedicated the Temple he offered 142,000 peace offerings:

1 Kings 8:63: “And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the Lord, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.

64 The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that was before the Lord was too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

65 And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days.”

As you can see, the Israelites feasted on them for two weeks.

Interestingly, no one was allowed to eat the fat or the blood from offerings:

Leviticus 3:17: “It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.”

Instead it was always given to God.

Cleansing Offerings

There were two types of offerings in the levitical system that dealt with being cleansed from

sin: the guilt offering (also known as the trespass offering) and the sin offering. The **sin offering** focused on the person's *guilt before God*, and dealt with accidental violations of the Law. The **trespass offering** focused on *damage done to other people*. When some sort of cleansing offering was required, the person would go before a priest and the priest would examine the offense and determine what type of sacrifice was needed.

It is very important to realize that both of these offerings dealt with *accidental* violations of the law. Neither of these sacrifices were able to forgive someone who had intentionally and knowingly sinned. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband he was not committing an accidental violation of the law – and that is why David couldn't just offer a sacrifice and move on. Also, cleansing offerings were only available in cases where the person was aware of the law *but did not realize that they had broken it*. This is *not* talking about people who were unaware of the law. (After all, if it was then people could get off free and clear by making sure they never studied the law or learned anything about it!)

The **sin offering** (which focused on guilt before God) is described in Leviticus 4. One of the interesting things about this sacrifice is that it varied depending on your position in society. Basically, the higher a person's position in society, the more expensive the sacrifice:

Leviticus 4:3: “If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering.”

Leviticus 4:13: “And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty;

14 When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation.”

Leviticus 4:22: “When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty;

23 Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish:”

Leviticus 4:27: “And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty;

28 Or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned.”

As you can see, the priest was to bring a young bullock, the whole congregation had to bring a bullock, the ruler had to bring a male kid of the goats, and a common person was to bring a female kid of the goats or a female lamb. A poor person could bring a dove or a pigeon, and a very poor person could bring fine flour.

The person who was making the offering had to identify with it by laying his hands on it:

Leviticus 4:4: “And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the Lord.”

When the whole nation had sinned, the elders of the land did this.
After the animal was slain, its blood was presented to God:

Leviticus 4:5: “And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock's blood, and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation:

6 And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary.

7 And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation; and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”

In the case of the priest and the nation, part of the blood was sprinkled before the veil and the horns of the altar of incense in the holy place, while the rest was poured out at the base of the altar. In the case of leaders and the common people, the blood was applied to the horns of the brazen altar at the door of the tabernacle.

The fat was burned on the altar, but the rest of the sacrifice was burned at a clean place outside the camp:

Leviticus 4:8: “And he shall take off from it all the fat of the bullock for the sin offering; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards,

9 And the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away,

10 As it was taken off from the bullock of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall burn them upon the altar of the burnt offering.

11 And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung,

12 Even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt.”

This was quite different from the burnt offering, where the animal was burned at the temple and only the ashes were disposed of outside the camp. Interestingly, the book of Hebrews says this:

Hebrews 13:12: “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

The sin offering focused on one's guilt before God and was burned outside the gate. The death of Christ also focused on our guilt before God – and He was crucified outside the gate.

The **trespass offering** (which focused on damage done to other people) is described Leviticus 5. This offering is for those who have sinned through *ignorance* – they knew the law but violated it accidentally, without knowing what they had done. It's worth noting that even though the sin was done in ignorance, the person was still guilty before God and had to offer a sacrifice in order to be forgiven. Sinning through ignorance was no defense: the sin still had to be paid for, and that meant a sacrifice had to be made. The Lord never simply overlooks sin. All sin, accidental or otherwise, must be paid for.

This sacrifice involved confessing the sin, making restitution for the damage, paying a 20% fine on top of that, and offering a ram to the Lord. The priest valued the ram in order to verify its value. (The restitution and fine were first given to the priest so that the priest could verify that everything was in order and it was permissible to offer the sacrifice.)

Leviticus 5:15: “If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering;

16 And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

17 And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.

18 And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist it not, and it shall be forgiven him.

19 It is a trespass offering: he hath certainly trespassed against the Lord.”

If the offended party wasn't available to receive the restitution then it could be paid to a relative. If there were no relatives then it remained with the priest.

The trespass offering emphasized the fact that it was a costly thing for people to sin, and it was a costly thing for God to forgive it. Forgiveness comes only by the death of an innocent substitute.

Conclusion

I think this quote sums it up well:

“Jesus provides all that we need. He is our burnt offering, and we must yield ourselves wholly to Him. He is our meal offering, the seed crushed and put through the fire, that we might have the bread of life; and we must feed upon Him. He is our drink offering who poured Himself out in sacrifice and service, and we must pour ourselves out for Him and for others. He is our fellowship offering, making life a joyful feast instead of a painful famine. He is our sin offering and our guilt offering,

for He bore our sins on His body and paid the full price for our sins.

“The nation of Israel had to offer six different sacrifices in order to have a right relationship with God, but Jesus Christ 'offered one sacrifice for sins forever' and took care of our sin problem completely.” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, pg. 29)

EVIDENCE FOR CREATION

Part 1: Mutations

According to evolutionary theory, the engine that drives evolution is mutations. The idea is this: a small, random change is made in an animal's genetic structure that yields some sort of benefit. This benefit gives the animal a survival advantage over other animals, so the mutated gene gets passed on to its offspring while creatures without the gene die off. Over time these accumulated changes result in the development of entirely new species.

This theory may sound plausible, but there are a number of serious problems with it.

1. You need a genetic structure before you can get started.

First of all, you have to have a genetic structure to work with before you can even get started. Just where did that structure come from? After all, evolutionists tell us that in the beginning there was no life; there was only a pond full of chemicals. Then one day the chemicals magically turned themselves into a life form, and life was born.

The problem with this is that the requirements of being a life form are rather high. In order to actually be alive and have offspring you have to have a way to do all these things:

- take in nourishment
- expel waste
- keep yourself separate from other chemicals
- survive
- reproduce yourself

That is a *lot* of functionality that had to suddenly appear *all on its own* at the *same time*, and it had to appear without any “evolution”. To quote Russell Grigg:

Harold J. Morowitz, Professor of Biophysics at Yale University, has taken into account the covalent bond energies required to actually form such a DNA molecule. He arrives at a probability figure for the spontaneous formation of one complete bacterium of *Escherichia coli* in the history of the universe, of less than one chance in 10 to the power 100 billion (which can be written $10^{-100,000,000,000}$).

To put that number in perspective, there are only 10^{81} atoms in the universe. It simply *could not have happened*.

2. You are trying to improve a complicated system by making random changes to it.

Assuming that you *did* have a genetic structure to work with, what are the odds that you could

improve an animal's DNA by making random changes to it? The simple truth is that it doesn't work that way. Making random changes to complex systems doesn't improve them; it harms them.

As an illustration, let's say that you had an encyclopedia from 1961 and you wanted to bring it up-to-date. If you started randomly removing and adding letters to it, how long would it take before you had a modern encyclopedia? It obviously doesn't work that way: randomly changing its contents would actually *corrupt* it and make it unreadable. Adding more time to the equation just results in a more badly corrupted encyclopedia.

But what if you had billions of encyclopedias and billions of years to try it? Given enough time, can't monkeys type the complete works of Shakespeare? The answer is no. Let's say that you wanted a monkey to type the 23rd Psalm, which contains just 603 characters (and is therefore much shorter than even *one* of the works of Shakespeare). If you gave a monkey a typewriter and that monkey typed one key per second without ever stopping, it would take 9.552×10^{1016} years for it to finish (The math for this is found in Part 2 of this appendix). Even if you filled the entire world with nothing but monkeys, they would not have completed that short psalm before every star in the universe burned itself out. Even *trillions* of years aren't enough time, and all we want to do is to recreate *a very short and simple psalm!* Monkeys *cannot* type the works of Shakespeare, nor can mutations create the human genome (which contains a *lot* more than just 603 “letters”).

But it gets even worse. The chance of a mutation is estimated to be 1 in 10^7 (1 in 10 million) – which is rare, but it does happen. The problem is that in order for evolution to occur you have to have *related* mutations. Related mutations are extremely rare. The odds of having two related mutations is 1 in $10^7 \times 10^7$, which is 1 in 10^{14} . That is one chance in 100 trillion. Even if that were to happen, though, it still wouldn't do much good; you need a lot more than two related mutations to create a species. For example, the human genome has about *3 billion* base pairs. In order to create that out of nothing (which is what evolution claims) you would need *billions* of related mutations!

Mathematics tells us that this simply could not have happened. The odds of getting three related mutations is 1 in 10^{21} . That chance is so small that if you filled all of the oceans with bacteria you *still* wouldn't have enough bacteria to find even *one* that had experienced three related mutations.

The odds of having four related mutations is 10^{28} , and the Earth itself isn't large enough to hold all of the bacteria that you would need to search through if you wanted to find an example of that. Needless to say, you need a *lot* more than just four mutations to turn pond scum into a geologist.

3. Mutations are overwhelmingly destructive.

The odds of having four related mutations is 10^{28} . That, however, is just the odds for *any* kind of mutation. It is *not* the odds of having mutations that are actually beneficial. More than 99.99% of all mutations are destructive, and the few that aren't destructive are neutral – they do neither harm nor good. Helpful mutations are extremely rare – and the odds that it will actually make a sizable difference in the organism's ability to survive (which is one of the key requirements of natural selection) is even smaller than that. The odds are *tremendously* against it, and yet evolutionists would have us believe that this process is so effective that it led to the evolution of *millions* of creatures. It simply could not have happened.

Notice, for instance, that no one believes that if you stand in front of an X-ray machine for an hour or so and let it mutate your DNA that you will evolve into a higher life form. At the same time, no one believes that if we eliminate the ozone layer and let the sun's UV rays mutate our DNA that it will improve life on earth. Everyone realizes how foolish that is – and that is because people understand that mutations are *destructive*. They don't create new species; they destroy them.

4. Even billions of years is not enough time.

Even if you add billions of years to the picture you still have problems; the additional amounts of time just aren't enough. Five billion years may seem like a lot of time, but it's only 10^{17} seconds. When you look at the odds of having just four related mutations and then consider the number of mutations you would need in order to turn a bacteria into a horse, you can begin to appreciate the magnitude of the task. An evolutionist once put the odds of a horse evolving at 1 in $10^{3,000,000}$ – and that is just to evolve *one creature*. Even five billion years (5×10^9) isn't enough to make a dent in those kind of odds.

This is what Sir Fred Hoyle (Professor of Astronomy at Cambridge) said about the idea that time plus chance could have created life – and this was said by someone who was not a Christian:

“Now imagine 10^{50} blind persons [that's 100,000 billion billion billion billion billion people; standing shoulder to shoulder, they would more than fill our entire planetary system], each with a scrambled Rubik cube, and try to conceive of the chance of them all simultaneously arriving at the solved form. You then have the chance of arriving by random shuffling [random variation] of **just one** of the many biopolymers on which life depends. The notion that not only the biopolymers but the operating program of a living cell could be arrived at by chance in a primordial soup here on earth is evidently *nonsense of a high order*.”

Here is another quote:

‘When we come to examine the simplest known organism capable of independent existence, the situation becomes even more fantastic. In the DNA chain of the chromosome of the bacterium *E. coli*, a favorite organism used by molecular biologists, the [DNA] helix consists of 3-4 million base pairs. These are all arranged in a sequence that is ‘meaningful’ in the sense that it gives rise to enzyme molecules which fit the various metabolites and products used by the cell. This unique sequence represents a choice of *one out of $10^{2,000,000}$ alternative ways* of arranging the bases! We are compelled to conclude that the origin of the first life was a unique event, which *cannot be discussed in terms of probability*.’ (Ambrose, E. *The Nature and Origin of the Biological World*.)

5. Our genetic structure is decaying.

Another important factor to consider is that our genetic structure is *decaying*. It is not improving; it is becoming corrupted!

Why does this matter? Well, in order for evolution to occur, the information that is added by mutations has to overcome genetic decay; otherwise you would never get ahead. In other words, evolution has to improve the organism faster than decay is taking it apart. Is the observed rate of beneficial mutations outpacing the rate of decay? Absolutely not! Mutations are overwhelmingly destructive, and a mechanism that does more genetic harm than good can never lead to the creation of a more advanced genetic structure. Instead it will destroy it – which is what we actually see happening.

6. Mutations result in the loss of information.

In the news you will often hear that a strain of bacteria has evolved resistance to an antibiotic. Evolutionists like to use this as proof of evolution, but the reality is that this is an entirely different situation. You see, in order for pond scum to evolve into a horse, the mutations have to *add new genetic information*. However, a bacteria that evolves resistance to an antibiotic has actually *lost* genetic information. The reason it is now resistant to treatment is because it has lost the vector that the antibiotic was attacking. While that may help it survive, the result is a net *loss* of information. You can never turn a bacteria into a horse by losing information.

It is entirely possible for a creature to experience a mutation that helps it survive while still resulting in a net loss of genetic information. For instance, on one windy island a species of winged beetles experienced a mutation that caused them to lose their wings. As long as they lived on that island this was beneficial: since they didn't have wings they weren't as likely to be blown into the ocean, and so they had a better chance of survival over the beetles that still had their wings. Over time this natural selection advantage would lead to the extermination of beetles with wings. However, *losing* wings is not going to help the beetle evolve into a more complex creature, since it now has less genetic information than it had in the past! *You can't evolve into a higher life form by losing information.*

Another example would be cave fish. There are some species of fish that have become trapped in caves, and over time they have lost their eyesight. Inside a cave this is a beneficial change: since there's no light to see with anyway, eyes are just a large, vulnerable body part that serves no useful function. A mutation that caused a fish to lose its eyes would give it a huge advantage over its neighbors – although *outside* the cave that same mutation would be a huge disadvantage. The loss of eyes still represents a genetic setback because the creature has *lost* information.

Bacteria that “evolve” resistance to drugs are in the same type of situation – the bacteria has lost some piece of information that the drug was using to target it. While this may help it survive, it can't evolve into a higher life form by losing information.

Part 2: Monkeys Typing Shakespeare

Let us imagine a special typewriter, ‘user-friendly’ to apes, with 50 keys, comprised of 26 capital letters, 10 numbers, one space bar, and 13 symbols for punctuation, etc. For the sake of simplicity we shall disregard lower-case letters and settle for typing all to be in capitals, and we shall disregard leap years.

How long would it take an operator, on the average, to correctly type the 23rd Psalm, by randomly striking keys? To obtain the answer, let us first consider the first verse of the Psalm, which reads: ‘THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT.’

According to the Multiplication Rule of the Probability (in simplified form) the chance of correctly typing the three designated letters ‘THE’ from possibilities is 1 in 50 x 50 x 50, which equals 125,000. At a rate of one strike per second, the average time taken to make 125,000 strikes is 34.72 hours.

The chance of randomly typing the eight keys (seven letters and one space) in the right sequence for the two words THE LORD is 1 in 50 x 50 ... eight times (i.e. 50⁸). This is 1 chance in 39,062 billion. There are 31,536,000 seconds in a year, so the average time taken in years to make

preservation, but their existence in huge deposits, often covering thousands of square kilometres.

4) Many processes, which we have been told take millions of years, do not need such time-spans at all.

a) Coal formation.

Argonne National Laboratories have shown that heating wood (lignin, its major component), water and acidic clay at 150°C (rather cool geologically) for 4 to 36 weeks, in a sealed quartz tube with no added pressure, forms high-grade black coal.

b) Opals.

Despite the common teaching that it takes millions of years to form opal, Australian researcher Len Cram has long been growing opal in his backyard laboratory. His opal is indistinguishable, under the electron microscope, from that mined in the field. He was awarded an honorary doctorate (by a secular university) for this research. All he does is mix together the right common chemicals — no heat, no pressure, and *definitely* no millions of years.

c) Rock and fossil formation.

Scientists have long known that petrification can happen quickly. A ‘petrified’ bowler hat is on display in a mining museum in New Zealand. Another example is a roll of no. 8 fencing wire which, in only 20 years, became encased in solid sandstone, containing hundreds of fossil shells. Petrified wood can also form quickly under the right conditions—one process has even been patented.

The famous multiple levels of ‘fossil forests’ in America’s Yellowstone National Park have now been shown to have formed in one volcanic event. Successive mudflows transported upright trees (minus most of their roots and branches) whose tree-ring signatures confirm that they grew at the one time.

5) The oceans are nowhere near salty enough.

Each year, the world’s rivers and underground streams add millions of tonnes of salt to the sea, and only a fraction of this goes back onto the land. Using the most favourable possible assumptions for long-agers, the absolute maximum age of the oceans is only a tiny fraction of their assumed billions-of-years age.

Part 4: Radioactive Dating Methods

1. All dating methods (including ones that point to thousands, not billions of years) are based on assumptions—beliefs, no matter how reasonable-sounding, that you can't prove but must accept by faith. For example:

- Assuming how much of a particular chemical was originally present
- Assuming that there has been no leaching by water of the chemicals in or out of the rock
- Assuming that radioactive decay rates have stayed the same for billions of years

2. Radiometric 'dating' labs do *not* measure age—they measure amounts of chemicals, then from this they *infer* age based on the underlying *assumptions*.

3. When the assumptions are tested by measuring rocks of known age—e.g. recent lava flows—they often fail miserably.

4. Objects of the same age, tested by different methods, have been shown to give 'dates' varying by a factor of *a thousand*.

5. The fact that there is some consistency to radiometric dates is explained in part by the tendency to publish only data consistent with the 'evolutionary age' already 'established' by fossils. Most radioactive dating laboratories prefer you to tell them what age you expect. It is hard to see why this would be necessary if these were 'absolute' methods. The entire geological 'millions of years' system was largely in place, based on the philosophical assumptions of men like Charles Lyell and James Hutton, before radioactivity was even discovered. Where a radioactive date contradicts the 'system' it is invariably discarded.

6. If a 'radiometric' date and a 'fossil' (evolutionary) date conflict, the radiometric date is *always* discarded.

Part 5: Dinosaurs And The Bible

Dinosaurs are actually mentioned several times in the Bible. They are not called "dinosaurs" because that word was not coined until long after the King James Bible was written. Although they are given different names, their description makes them easy to identify.

First, there is the **behemoth**:

Job 40:15: “Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox.

16 Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly.

17 He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together.

18 His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron.

19 He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him.

20 Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play.

21 He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens.

22 The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about.

23 Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.

24 He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.”

This passage describes the “behemoth” as being “chief in the ways of God”. It is an enormous creature with strong bones and has the ability to drink enormous amounts of fluid. The behemoth is an herbivore; it eats grass, not other animals.

Some people claim that this is describing an elephant, but there is a problem with that theory: the behemoth has a tail that is compared to a cedar tree! If you have ever seen an elephant then you know that they have ridiculously scrawny tails. When you think of a giant, plant-eating animal with a tail the size of a tree, what do you think of? A brontosaurus, or something like it.

There is also the **leviathan**. It is such an impressive animal that God devotes an entire chapter of the Bible to it. Rather than quote the entire chapter I will just list some excerpts:

Job 41:11: “Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?

2 Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? . . .

5 Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?

6 Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants? . . .

8 Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more.

9 Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?

10 None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me? . . .

14 Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about.

15 His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal.

16 One is so near to another, that no air can come between them.

17 They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered.

18 By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.

19 Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out.

20 Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron.

21 His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. . .

25 When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves.

26 The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon.

27 He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood.

28 The arrow cannot make him flee: slingstones are turned with him into stubble.

29 Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.

30 Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire.

31 He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.

32 He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary.

33 **Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear.**

34 He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.

This is quite an impressive animal! The leviathan is covered with airtight scales and has incredible strength. It literally breathes fire and causes the river to boil. No one dares attack him; even mighty warriors are terrified at its presence. Arrows and swords are useless against him. God says that there is no other creature like it on earth who is made without fear. It is so severe that no one dares stir it up.

Some have claimed that this is a crocodile, but that's ridiculous. Crocodiles don't breathe fire! What we have here is a dragon – a real, live, fire-breathing dragon. Countless cultures have stories of dragons and left records of them in their art. Today we dismiss their written accounts of dragons as mere myth, but I think that's a mistake. Dragons were real creatures that existed long ago. Job was clearly familiar with them, and the leviathan is even mentioned in Psalms (Psalm 74:14, 104:26) and Isaiah (Isaiah 27:1).

But that is not the only Biblical evidence that we have. The Hebrew word *tanniyn* (Strong's #8577) appears 28 times in the Bible. In the King James it is often translated as "dragon". Even though the word is translated in numerous different ways, it is actually the *same word*. If you look at the passages where *tanniyn* appears you will see a fascinating picture. The passages are:

Gen 1:21: And God created great -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ (KJV: great whales; NASB: great sea monsters; NIV: great creatures of the sea)

Exd 7:9: . . . Take thy rod, and cast [it] before Pharaoh, [and] it shall become a -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ (KJV: serpent; NASB: snake; NIV: serpent)

Exd 7:10: . . . Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ (KJV: serpent; NASB: snake; NIV: serpent)

Exd 7:12: For they cast down every man his rod, and they became -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. (KJV: serpent; NASB: snake; NIV: serpent)

Deu 32:33: Their wine [is] the poison of -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, and the cruel venom of asps. (KJV: dragons; NASB: serpents; NIV: serpents)

Neh 2:13: And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem . . . (KJV: dragons; NASB: dragons; NIV: jackals)

Job 7:12: [Am] I a sea, or a -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, that thou settest a watch over me? (KJV: whale; NASB: sea monster; NIV: monster)

Job 30:29: I am a brother to -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, and a companion to owls. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Psa 44:19: Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, and covered us with the shadow of death. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Psa 74:13: Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ in the waters. (KJV: dragons; NASB: sea monsters; NIV: monsters)

Psa 91:13: Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ shalt thou trample under feet. (KJV: dragons; NASB: serpent; NIV: serpent)

Psa 148:7: Praise the LORD from the earth , ye -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, and all deeps: (KJV: dragons; NASB: sea monsters; NIV: sea creatures)

Isa 13:22: And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ in [their] pleasant palaces: . . . (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Isa 27:1: In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ that [is] in the sea. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: monster)

Isa 34:13: And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, [and] a court for owls. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Isa 35:7: And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, where each lay, [shall be] grass with reeds and rushes. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Isa 43:20: The beast of the field shall honour me, the -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ and the owls . . . (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Isa 51:9: . . . [Art] thou not it that hath cut Rahab , [and] wounded the -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ (KJV: dragons; NASB: dragons; NIV: monster)

Jer 9:11: And I will make Jerusalem heaps, [and] a den of -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate , without an inhabitant. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Jer 10:22: . . . to make the cities of Judah desolate, [and] a den of -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Jer 14:6: And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷; their eyes did fail, because [there was] no grass. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Jer 49:33: And Hazor shall be a dwelling for -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, [and] a desolation for ever . . . (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Jer 51:34: Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me . . . he hath swallowed me up like a -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ . . . (KJV: dragons; NASB: monster; NIV: serpent)

Jer 51:37: And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Lam 4:3: Even the -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones . . . (KJV: sea monsters; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Eze 29:3: . . . Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I [am] against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ that lieth in the midst of his rivers . . . (KJV: dragon; NASB: monster; NIV: monster)

Eze 32:2: . . . Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou [art] as a -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷ in the seas: . . . (KJV: crocodile; NASB: monster; NIV: monster)

Mic 1:8: . . . I will make a wailing like the -----?⁰⁸⁵⁷⁷, and mourning as the owls. (KJV: dragons; NASB: jackals; NIV: jackals)

Is it possible that the Bible is not talking about jackals or crocodiles but actual *dragons*? These verses paint an interesting picture of a very interesting animal.

THE FLOOD

There came a time when the wickedness of man became exceedingly great:

Genesis 6:5: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

We have already talked about the nephilim so I will not repeat that discussion here. Even aside from the nephilim, mankind had become incredibly depraved. According to verse 5, every single thought, hope, and dream of man was pure evil. Mankind had become completely corrupt. This grieved the Lord to such an extent that he decided to annihilate all living creatures off the face of the Earth.

Noah, however, found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God decided to spare Noah and the animal kingdom, so He commanded Noah to build the Ark:

Genesis 6:13: “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.”

The Ark's builder was Noah. It was to be constructed out of **gopher wood** and coated inside and outside with pitch. Nobody knows what gopher wood is or even what that particular Hebrew word means; in all likelihood it refers to either an extinct type of tree or some sort of long-lost lamination process. But we do know the boat was a wooden vessel; after all, it was made of gopher **wood**, not gopher metal.

The Ark was to contain rooms (“...rooms shalt thou make...”). These rooms would contain the **animals, the living quarters for Noah's family, and the supplies** that Noah needed to make the voyage. I think it's possible that Noah may have taken some other things as well. The Bible does not say this, but I imagine that Noah would have taken along as much of the Old World as he could – things like books, **scientific knowledge**, and anything else that could help him establish a new life in the new world. After all, he knew that God was about to destroy the entire world. When Noah got off the Ark the only things that he would have with him are the things that he brought along. The future of civilization depended entirely upon him and his family. Any knowledge that he did not take with them would simply be lost.

Could you imagine what it would be like to be told that all life on Earth was going to be destroyed *except for you and your family*, and that it would be your job to rebuild afterward? How would you handle such a monumental task? In a very real and literal way the survival of *all living creatures* would depend on **you**. How would you like to have *that* job?

It is not known if Noah had help building the Ark or if he did all of the work himself. Also, since almost all knowledge of the pre-Flood world has been lost, there's no way to tell what tools he used to build it. What we do know is that **Noah was charged with the responsibility for building the Ark** and Noah executed that charge faithfully. According to Genesis 6:3, Noah had **120 years** in which to build the Ark. It is fairly certain that it took Noah all 120 of those years because I Peter 3:20 says that **the Lord staved off His judgment of Earth until the Ark was done**.

Genesis gives us the exact dimensions of the ark:

Genesis 6:15: "And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breath of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits."

The Ark was **450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high**. It had a **total floor space of 100,000 square feet**, a **volume of about 1.4 million cubic feet**, and a **cargo capacity of 15,000 tons**. Tests have shown that the Ark's dimensions would have given it incredible stability. It could have stayed afloat in even the most unruly seas.

Boats larger than the Ark were not built again until **the end of the 19th century**. It was truly an enormous ship, and was one of the largest wooden vessels of all time. To put it into perspective, the *Titanic* was only 300 feet longer than the Ark. Even by today's standards it would be considered a mid-sized cargo ship.

Genesis 6:16: "A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it."

The Ark was to have **an exterior door and three floors**. It was also to have a **window** that measured **18 inches** on each side. Having only one window and one door would probably have **added to the hull's integrity and strength**. After all, the Ark had to stay afloat in very rough seas. The boat did not need sails or a rudder because it wasn't trying to go anywhere – all it needed to do was **keep floating and not capsize** or break apart. The dimensions the Lord specified would enable it to accomplish exactly that.

Genesis 6:17: "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die."

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

Noah was commanded to bring into the ark **fowls, cattle, and creeping things**. (Notice that he

did not have to go and find them; verse 20 tells us that **they would come to him**. Also notice that aquatic animals such as fish were not included.) He was to have on board **two** of every kind – **one male and one female** (although further details are given in the next chapter). These “kinds” are not necessarily the same thing as species today. For example, it's quite possible that Noah brought on board just one type of dog, which then gave rise to all of the breeds that now exist. This would have dramatically reduced the number of animals that he would have brought on board.

Estimates of the number of animals that would have been on board range from **a few thousand to 16,000**. It's important to remember that the animals did not necessarily have to be enormous, full-grown adults; juveniles would have worked just as well. Studies have suggested that **only about half of the Ark's space would have been needed for the animals**, leaving the other half for **food, water, supplies, and even other people**.

As it turned out, there were only **eight people on board the Ark: Noah, his wife, his three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth), and his sons' wives**. These eight people were charged with caring for the most amazing zoo that ever existed. It would have been quite a feeling to know that the only surviving animals in the entire world were the ones that were on the Ark with you! If you accidentally stepped on an animal and killed it, that species would be wiped out *permanently*.

Caring for the animals would have been a challenge, but Noah did have one big advantage: in his day all animals were vegetarians. Animals and people did not become carnivores until after the Flood.

For answers to a few other technical questions²⁸:

How Did Noah Fit All the Animals on the Ark?

According to the Bible, the Ark had three decks (floors). It is not difficult to show that there was plenty of room for 16,000 animals (the maximum number of animals on the Ark, if the most liberal approach to counting animals is applied), assuming they required approximately the same floor space as animals in typical farm enclosures and laboratories. The vast majority of the creatures (birds, reptiles, and mammals) were **small** (the largest only a few hundred pounds of body weight). What's more, many could have been **housed in groups**, which would have further reduced the required space.

It is still necessary to take account of the floor spaces required by large animals, such as elephants and rhinos. But even these, collectively, do not require a large area because **it is most likely that these animals were young**, but not newborns. **Even the largest dinosaurs were relatively small when only a few years old**.

What Did the Dinosaurs Eat?

Dinosaurs could have eaten basically the same foods as the other animals. The large sauropods could have eaten compressed hay, other dried plant material, seeds and grains, and the like.

How Were the Animals Cared For?

We must distinguish between the long-term care required for animals kept in zoos and the

²⁸ Source: www.answersingenesis.org

temporary, emergency care required on the Ark. **The animals' comfort and healthy appearance were not essential for emergency survival during one stressful year, where survival was the primary goal.**

Studies of nonmechanized animal care indicate that eight people could have fed and watered 16,000 creatures. The key is to avoid unnecessary walking around. As the old adage says, "Don't work harder, work smarter."

Therefore, Noah probably **stored the food and water near each animal**. Even better, **drinking water could have been piped into troughs**, just as the Chinese have used bamboo pipes for this purpose for thousands of years. The use of some sort of **self-feeders**, as is commonly done for birds, would have been relatively easy and probably essential. **Animals that required special care or diets were uncommon** and should not have needed an inordinate amount of time from the handlers. Even animals with the most specialized diets in nature could have been switched to readily sustainable substitute diets. Of course, this assumes that animals with specialized diets today were likewise specialized at the time of the Flood.

How Did the Animals Breathe?

Based on two decades of research, nothing more was needed than a basic, non-mechanical ventilation system. The density of animals on the Ark, compared to the volume of enclosed space, was much less than we find in some modern, mass animal housing used to keep stock raised for food (such as chicken farms), which requires **no special mechanical ventilation**.

It is reasonable to believe that **one relatively small window would have adequately ventilated the Ark**. Of course if there were a window along the top center section, which the Bible allows, all occupants would be even more comfortable. It is also interesting to note that **the convective movement of air**, driven by temperature differences between the warm-blooded animals and the cold interior surfaces, **would have been significant enough to drive the flow of air**. Plus, wind blowing into the window would have enhanced the ventilation further. However, if supplementary ventilation was necessary, it could have been provided by wave motion, fire thermal, or even a small number of animals harnessed to slow-moving rotary fans.

What Did Noah and His Family Do with the Animal Waste?

As much as **12 U.S. tons (11 m. tons) of animal waste may have been produced daily**. The key to keeping the enclosures clean was to avoid the need for Noah and his family to do the work. The right systems could also prevent the need to change animal bedding. Noah could have accomplished this in several ways. One possibility would be to **allow the waste to accumulate below the animals**, much as we see in modern pet shops. In this regard, there could have been **slatted floors**, and animals could have trampled their waste into the pits below. Small animals, such as birds, could have **multiple levels** in their enclosures, and waste could have simply accumulated at the bottom of each.

The danger of toxic or explosive manure gases, such as methane, would be alleviated by the **constant movement of the Ark**, which would have allowed manure gases to be constantly released. Secondly, methane, which is half the density of air, **would quickly find its way out of**

a small opening such as a window. There is no reason to believe that the levels of these gases within the Ark would have approached hazardous levels.

Alternatively, **sloped floors** would have allowed the waste to flow into large central gutters. Noah's family could have then **dumped this overboard** without an excessive expenditure of manpower.

The problem of manure odor may, at first thought, seem insurmountable. But we must remember that, throughout most of human history, **humans lived together with their farm animals.** Barns, separate from human living quarters, are a relatively recent development.

While the voyage of the Ark **may not have been comfortable or easy**, it was certainly doable, even under such unprecedented circumstances.

After the Ark was ready, the Lord commanded him to board it:

Genesis 7:1: "And the Lord said to Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth."

A week before the Flood occurred the Lord gave Noah some last-minute instructions. Noah was to have **seven pairs of every clean beast, two pairs of every unclean beast, and seven pairs of every bird.** The purpose of this was to make sure that they did not become extinct.

Also, notice that the reason the Lord spared Noah and his family is because He found Noah to be righteous. **His righteousness spared him and his family** from the judgment that destroyed the rest of mankind. In a like manner, our own salvation through Jesus Christ will spare us from the final judgment of the Lake of Fire.

Genesis 7:5: "And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.

6 And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

10 And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth."

The Bible states that **Noah did everything that the Lord commanded him.** This is quite a testimony! Would it not be amazing if the Lord could say the same thing about us? It is no wonder that

the Lord found him to be righteous; when the Lord gave him commands they were obeyed.

The Flood happened when Noah was **six hundred years old**. When you account for the fact that people before the Flood lived 12 times longer than we do, that would be equivalent to about 50. Just as God had said, the animals came to Noah and boarded the Ark two by two – male and female.

Genesis 7:11: “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broke up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

The water that created the Flood came from two sources: a **vast source of water deep underground** (the “fountains of the great deep”), and a **vast source of water in the sky** (the “windows of heaven”). No people or land animals survived:

Genesis 7:12 “And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.”

13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

14 They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.”

It would appear that both the animals and Noah's family **boarded the ark on the very day that the Flood occurred**. The Bible gives an exact day – the **600th year** of Noah's life, in the **second month**, and the **17th day**. It is possible to use the chronologies in the Bible to pinpoint the time between Creation and the Flood. If you add up the years in the genealogies, the Flood happened when the world was **1656 years old**:

Verse	Event	Earth's Age
1:1-31	Creation	0
5:3	Seth born when Adam was 130	130
5:6	Enos born when Seth was 105	235
5:9	Cainan born when Enos was 90	325
5:12	Mahalaleel born when Cainan was 70	395
5:15	Jared born when Mahalaleel was 65	460
5:18	Enoch born when Jared was 162	622
5:21	Methuselah born when Enoch was 65	687
5:25	Lamech born when Methuselah was 187	874
5:28	Noah born when Lamech was 182	1056
11:10	Shem born when Noah was 502	1558
7:6	Flood when Noah was 600	1656

This can be used to calculate the year that the Flood happened. The calculation goes like this:

11:10	Arphaxad born when Shem was 100	1658
11:12	Salah born when Arphad was 35	1693
11:14	Eber born when Salah was 30	1723
11:16	Peleg born when Eber was 34	1757
11:18	Reu born when Peleg was 30	1787
11:20	Serug born when Reu was 32	1819
11:22	Nahor born when Serug was 30	1849
11:24	Terah born when Nahor was 29	1878
11:32, 12:4	Abraham born when Terah was 130	2008
12:4	Abraham enters Canaan was 75	2083

Time from Abraham left Haran until the Exodus: exactly 430 years to the day. (Ge 12:10, Ex 12:40, Gal 3:17)	2513
Exodus to start of Temple: 479 years (1 Ki 6:1, in the 480th year or after 479 years)	2992
Start of Temple to division of Israel into two kingdoms: 37 years (Solomon reigned 40 years, 1Ki 11:42, temple started in his 4th year)	3029
Division of the Kingdom to final deportation about four years after Jerusalem fell: 390 whole years plus part of one year (Eze 4:4-6) Final deportation in 584 BC	3421

Hence the date creation: 584 BC + 3421 years – 1 year = 4004 BC

So, if creation happened in 4004 BC, and the Flood happened 1,656 years after creation, then **the Flood would have occurred in 2348 BC**. If creation happened in October (which is a topic for another time), then the Flood would have happened in December.

As a side-note, notice that verse 16 says that **the Lord shut Noah in**. Noah was not the one who decided when the door should be closed; that was done by God Himself. This makes sense, because when that door was closed no one else could be saved. At that point it was too late.

Genesis 7:17: “And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth.

18 And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:
22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.
23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.
24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.”

Here we are given details of the Flood itself. The storm raged for **40 days and nights**, and the flood waters covered the entire planet for **150 days**. The flood waters rose above the highest mountain to a height of **23 feet**, and it was so severe that **everything except for aquatic life died**. All birds and cattle died; all animals and insects died; and the entire human race died. The only survivors were those who were on board the Ark.

Genesis 8:1: “And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged;
2 The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained:
3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.
4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.
5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.”

Here the Bible talks about the end of the Flood. Notice that **the Flood did not just slowly die down**; instead the Lord acted to put an end to it. He did this through the **creation of a wind**, which calmed the waters. He **closed the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven**, and He allowed the waters to recede.

Where did all of the water go? It actually didn't go anywhere. It's still here! About **75% of the planet is covered by water** (to say nothing of the vast quantities of water that are underground or in the Earth's crust). The only reason the entire planet is not underwater is because the Lord formed ocean basins to contain the vast amounts of water that we find on the planet today. (If the basins were smoothed out the planet would still be flooded.) By creating these basins He drained the water off of the rest of the planet, which allowed the mountains to re-emerge.

It took quite a bit of time to drain the water: the Flood started in the **second month** with a storm that lasted **40 days**, but the tops of the mountains weren't seen until the **tenth month**. Once the initial storm was over (which only lasted a little over a month), Noah and his family spent the rest of the time waiting for the water to calm and then recede.

Genesis 8:6: “And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:
7 And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

8 Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;

9 But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

10 And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;

11 And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

12 And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.”

After the flood waters started receding from the ground, Noah ran a series of tests to see if he could leave the ark. The test consisted of releasing two birds – **a raven and a dove**. When the dove returned with an **olive leaf** Noah knew that trees were growing once more and that the Flood must finally be over. The next time he released the bird it did not come back. The great Flood had finally come to an end, and there was once more life upon the surface of the earth.

However, even though he knew there was life on the earth, he was not yet ready to leave the ark. One more thing needed to happen first.

Genesis 8:13: “And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.”

This passage gives us a timeline of events. The Flood began on the in the **2nd month and 17th day of Noah's 600th year**, and the ground finally dried in the **2nd month, 27th day, and 601st year**. This means the Flood lasted **one year and ten days**. That is also how long Noah's family spent in the Ark with all of the animals.

Genesis 8:15: “And God spake unto Noah, saying,

16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.”

It is interesting to note that Noah **waited for the Lord's command to leave the Ark**, and when that command came he left, bringing with him every other living creature that was on board the Ark. The Lord commanded the remaining living creatures to **repopulate the Earth** and they did, giving rise to the amazing variety of life that still remains to this day. **Every living human being is a direct**

descendant of Noah, and every living animal is a descendant from a pair of creatures that were on board the Ark. That is an amazing fact to think about.

Genesis 8:20: “And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21: And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

The remainder of the passage is a covenant between the Lord and mankind. (This covenant is often called the Noahic Covenant.) The Lord makes a number of promises, one of which is that **as long as the earth lasts He will never again destroy every living creature.**

Of course, one day the world will be **destroyed in fire and then made new.** But a disaster like the Flood will never happen again. Until the very end nature will continue on its normal course, bringing seasons and the rising sun.

Genesis 9:1: “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.

3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.”

Here we see one of several changes that happen after the Flood. **When the Lord originally created mankind He gave them only plants to eat.** All living creatures were created to be vegetarians – which makes sense when you realize that **in the beginning there was no death**, and all of creation was intended to live forever. Plus, before the Flood mankind lived in harmony with the animal kingdom. Men and animals did not hunt or fear each other.

Now, however, things are different. The Lord put the **fear of man into animals**; their close relationship was gone. Now men could eat animals for food. This is not a guilty pleasure, but one the Lord Himself gave to us and urged us to enjoy with gratitude.

Genesis 9:4: “But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

Here the Lord establishes **human government** and charges mankind with the pursuit of justice. The crime of murder is to be met with capital punishment, which mankind is authorized to carry out

against the guilty party. No more would God confront criminals personally and execute the sentence against them, as He did with Cain. Now **mankind was responsible for judging the guilty and carrying out their sentence**. This is why the state may execute criminals – the Lord gave them that responsibility.

Genesis 9:7: “And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

10 And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Here the Lord makes a promise, not only to all of mankind but to all of creation. The Lord promised that He would **never again destroy the entire world in a flood**. The terrible and awesome event that destroyed the whole world would never be repeated. Noah and his sons did not have to fear that another flood would destroy all life on the planet. What just happened would never happen again.

The Lord did *not* promise to never destroy the Earth. The day will come when it will be destroyed, but this time it will be destroyed by fire instead of water. That, however, is a topic for another time.

Genesis 9:12: “And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

After promising to never again send a Flood to destroy all life on Earth, the Lord gave mankind a token of that promise. That token, of course, is the rainbow. It is amazing to realize that the incredibly beautiful rainbow was given as part of a promise from God – a promise that no matter how it may seem at the time, the rain will stop and the flood waters will abate. The great Flood will never happen again.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

In Genesis 11 we find the story of the Tower of Babel. Before we get into it, however, let's take a look at the context. Each story in the Bible takes place at a specific location and time, and both must be understood in order for the story to make sense. If you take a passage out of context you will almost certainly arrive at an erroneous conclusion.

First let's look at the **time**. The chapters immediately before Genesis 11 tell the story of the Flood, and the chapters after it tell the story of Abraham. We know that the Flood happened in 2348 BC, and we also know that Abraham was born 292 years after the Flood. This story, then, happened sometime between **2348 BC and 2056 BC**. Noah and his son Shem would have still been alive at this time, and the Flood would be a very recent memory. It would not be hard to look around and see evidence that God had just destroyed the entire world in a global catastrophe.

As far as **place** is concerned, the story happens in the land of Shinar. This corresponds to modern-day Iraq. One interesting fact to note is that the famous king Nimrod established his kingdom there:

Genesis 10:8: “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.
9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.
10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.”

Another interesting thing to note is that the word Shinar could also be translated Babylon. The nation of Babylon, of course, is featured prominently throughout the Scriptures.

Let's dissect the passage section by section:

Genesis 11:1: “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.”

This story happened less than three centuries after the entire planet's population was wiped out by a Flood, leaving Noah and his family to repopulate the globe. It is easy to understand why there was **only one language**. After just three centuries, the surviving human population would have been quite small, and they apparently all lived in the same place. It would only be natural for everyone to use whatever language Noah spoke – after all, the entire race were his descendants, and he was still alive.

Genesis 11:2: “And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.”

Apparently the entire human population lived together **in a single community**. This is not very surprising. Remember, when Noah stepped off the Ark the entire planet was empty. When his children had children of their own they probably set up house right next to their parents, and then their children did the same, and so forth. (Think about it: the *entire planet* was empty. Your family was the only group of humans that existed, and at the time dinosaurs roamed the Earth. Would *you* want to live all by yourself?)

It seems that this group of people wandered from place to place, and in their wanderings they

came across a plain in what is now modern-day Iraq. Since that piece of land looked good to them, they decided to **settle down and build a city** instead of continuing to roam as nomads.

Genesis 11:3: “And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

As you can see, the people started making bricks. Once they had bricks they decided to build a city and a tower.

So far none of this is very surprising. It's not surprising that the human race would live together in the same place and speak the same language. It's not surprising that they would wander around looking for a good home. It's also not surprising that when they found a suitable spot they would decide to settle down and build a city.

What *is* interesting is their reason for doing this. They **did not want to be scattered** over the face of the whole Earth. This was actually an act of rebellion. You see, after the Flood the Lord commanded mankind to repopulate the planet:

Genesis 9:1: “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”

Now, I don't think this necessarily means that newlyweds had to leave their parents and wander to some uninhabited region as soon as they got married. But it does mean that God wanted the *entire* planet to be repopulated, and the human race was not interested in doing that. They didn't want to be scattered everywhere. They wanted to live together as a unit and leave the rest of the planet empty.

It can be seen from the text that they were afraid of something. Building the city was more than just an attempt to form a single community; it was a way to “**make a name**” for themselves. Only by “making a name” for themselves would they be able to avoid being scattered all over the planet. In essence, they wanted to *be somebody*. This raises the question: in whose eyes did they want to be famous and powerful? After all, they were the *only group of humans on the planet*. Who, exactly, was the big threat? Who were they worried was going to come and scatter them? What were they afraid of?

I think they were afraid of God. Genesis 10:8-10 tells us that the city of Babel was founded by Nimrod. Josephus records that Nimrod was a rebellious, wicked man who hated God for destroying the world in the Flood. He was determined to fight God and overthrow Him. Nimrod decided to build a tower so tall that if God send another Flood, He would be unable to wipe out mankind a second time. (The fact that God had promised to *not* send another worldwide Flood was apparently lost on him.) The city of Babel was an attempt to build a one-world government that was dedicated to fighting God.

God, of course, noticed what they were doing. He was not amused:

Genesis 11:5: “And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not

understand one another's speech.”

When God saw what they were doing He decided to take action. He saw that the human race was unified and that nothing was going to prevent them from carrying out their plan. So God came up with a brilliant way to scatter them over the face of the Earth: He confused their language. Since they could no longer understand each other they couldn't live together anymore, and had to split up.

It's worth noting that God did not have some angel carry out the sentence against them; instead He did it personally. It's very common for God to send angels or prophets to do His bidding, and it is very rare for God to come to Earth personally to execute judgment. The only other times God has done this are in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the case of the Second Coming (where Jesus returns to judge the *entire world*). So for God to come to Earth to *personally* judge someone is a very serious matter. It is a sign that you are in big, *big* trouble.

God's strategy worked brilliantly. With the **language confounded** no one could work together, and so people were scattered over the whole world:

Genesis 11:8: “So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.”

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

The word Babel means **confusion**. Incidentally, this is where languages came from. After the Flood there was just one language, but when the Lord confused the languages it gave rise to the bewildering array of tongues that we see today. The fact that there are different languages is a direct result of divine intervention by God Himself. If Babel had never been built then the situation might be very different.

This story illustrates that God *does* govern in the affairs of men. He does not let mankind do whatever they want to do, nor does He passively watch from afar. God governs in history and guides it exactly where He wants it to go. This idea can be seen throughout the Scriptures:

Proverbs 16:33: “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

Proverbs 21:1: “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

Psalms 2:1: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?”

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.”

The people of this world may rage against God and make plans against Him, but He who sits in the heavens laughs at them. As the people of Babel discovered, any attempt to defeat God is extremely foolish and is doomed to fail.

TITHING

In the Church today it is very common for pastors to teach that Christians are obligated to pay the tithe that is commanded in the Law of Moses. I have heard many people claim that tithing is still binding to believers today:

Numbers 18:21: “And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. ...

24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.”

Furthermore, it is taught that the curse of Malachi rests upon those that will not pay this tithe:

Malachi 3:8: “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

However, is this really true? Are Christians commanded to tithe, and are believers cursed if they do not give their local church ten percent of their income?

Before I answer these questions, let's take a look at the context of these passages. We need to understand what the tithe actually was before we can explore whether it applies today.

Background

In Numbers 8 the Lord lays down a series of ordinances regarding the Levites. The Levites were given the job of taking care of the tabernacle:

Numbers 8:19: “And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary.”

The reason the Levites were given this job is because in the Old Testament, before Jesus came, the Israelites were not allowed to interact directly with God. This was because they (like everyone else) were sinful and unholy, and if they approached God in their unholiness they would die. In order to save

their lives the Lord appointed the tribe of Levi to take care of the tabernacle. The Levites were divided into two groups: Aaron and his sons were made priests and became responsible for offering the sacrifices, and the rest of the tribe was charged with taking care of the tabernacle (and later, the Temple). The Levites were the *only ones* who were authorized to serve in the tabernacle. The Lord was quite strict about this:

Numbers 18:22: “Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.”

If you were not a Levite you could not serve in the tabernacle, and the penalty for breaking this commandment was *death*. Your eligibility was determined by your ancestry. Later temples had an outer court that non-Levites could enter after they had purified themselves, but even then they could not enter the Temple itself. Even the high priest (the oldest son of Aaron of each generation) could only enter the Holy of Holies *once a year* to make atonement on behalf of the people, and before he could enter a sacrifice was first offered to cleanse his own impurities (Heb. 9:7).

Even if you *were* a Levite, the requirements for being involved in the service of the tabernacle were very strict. As Numbers 8 and Leviticus 21 explains, not only did the Levites have to be of the tribe of Levi, but they had to be of a certain age (starting at 25 and forcing mandatory requirement at age 50), have no physical handicaps (Lev. 21:17-21), and abide by certain purification laws. These were the people that interacted with God on behalf of the nation of Israel. Simply put, you had to do things God's way and you had to do things precisely right or God would strike you dead. There was no leeway for error or personal flair. Nothing less than absolute holiness and perfection could enter His presence. (Incidentally, those requirements have never changed; the only reason we can enter God's presence is because we are clothed in Jesus' righteousness. His absolute perfection cleanses us of our sins and grants us entrance to Heaven. Those who try to enter on their own merits, or apart from Jesus, will find themselves damned. There simply is no other way.)

All of this brings up a question: if you are a Levite serving in the Temple then where does your income come from? When the land of Canaan was given to the Israelites the Levites were not given a portion of the land as an inheritance (Numbers 18:20). Instead they were to dwell in a series of cities throughout the land of Israel (Joshua 21). The tithe was given to them as their inheritance (Numbers 18:24). Since they were full-time priests and were given no land on which to grow crops, this tithe was their livelihood. The Levites depended completely upon it. When the people neglected to provide this tithe the Lord became angry, which can be seen in Malachi 3:9 (quoted at the beginning of this lesson).

The system that God established in the Old Testament could be described like this: the Israelites were not holy enough to interact directly with God. In order to save their lives the Lord took one of the tribes of Israel and dedicated them to serving in the tabernacle on behalf of the people. Since they were dedicated to the Lord's service God gave them no inheritance in the land; instead, the Israelites were to give the Levites one tenth of their crops (Lev. 27:30) and the Levites were to live off of that.

This situation changed *dramatically* when Jesus died on the cross and rose again. Jesus replaced the Levites as our bridge to God. We no longer need a high priest to offer yearly pleas for us in the Holy of Holies, for Jesus has finished our salvation. Hebrews 9 and 10 explains this in great detail, and I will only quote a portion of it here:

Hebrews 9:11: “But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ...

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Christians no longer need a class of Levites to interact with God on their behalf because Christ's death has consecrated us as a nation of priests:

Hebrews 10:19: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;”

Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the price of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Peter 2:9: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that He should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:”

It is very important to realize that there is no longer a tribe of Levi ministering to God on behalf of His people. Jesus has bridged the gap between man's sinfulness and God's holiness once and for all. Christians are a royal priesthood, able to boldly approach the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). In the past this would have brought instant death, but Jesus changed that forever.

Pastors today minister to the body of Christ *but they are not Levites*. In order to become a Levite you had to be able to prove the purity of your lineage (that is, present documented evidence that all of your forefathers were from the tribe of Levi), you had to be ordained in a certain way, and you had to meet certain physical characteristics. The Levites were pointing the way to what Christ would accomplish in His sacrifice, and that sacrifice has been made. Pastors today do not approach God once a year to atone for the sins of their congregations. They do not sacrifice animals on behalf of anybody. Their job is *completely different* from the Levites.

It is also worth noting that tithes were to be brought *into the Temple*. This can be seen in Malachi 3:10, in which the Lord says “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be

meat in mine house". In the Old Testament God did not dwell within His people. Instead the glory of God resided in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. When the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies once a year he was going before the *actual presence of God* to intercede on behalf of the nation. God Himself dwelt within the Temple, which can be seen passages such as 1 Kings 8:10-11. The reason that Jews no longer offer sacrifices today is because they have no Temple. Modern Jews also do not tithe because tithes could only be given to the Levites *and there are no Levites today*.

As Christ predicted when talking to the woman at the well (John 4:21-23), Christians do not gather at a single Temple in order to approach the presence of God. This is because Christians *are* temples of the Living God, for God dwells within us, not inside a building in the Middle East:

1 Corinthians 3:16: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

Conclusions

It should be apparent by now that it is *impossible* for Christians today to tithe according to the Law of Moses. The tithe could only be given to the Levites (Numbers 18:24) and there are no Levites today. Christ has fulfilled the sacrificial system and brought it to an end. Even if there were Levites still around it is not possible for Christians to bring tithes into the Temple because *there is no Temple*. Instead Christ dwells within us, making our bodies the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:16).

I want to emphasize this point, because it is easily glazed over. It is *impossible* for Christians to offer the tithe that the Lord instituted in Numbers 18. It *cannot* be done. The only people who were allowed to receive the tithe was the Levites, not random Gentiles from your local community (or even random Jews, for that matter). The job of Levites was to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, which is something that pastors do not and cannot do. Pastors are *not* the same thing as Levites.

The curse and blessing of Malachi 3 simply cannot be applied to modern Christians. God was concerned about providing *the Levites* with a livelihood, but that group of people no longer exists. God no longer has a Temple in which goods can be stored and given to a priestly class. *That entire system is gone*. Even if Christians wanted to bring food into the Temple it isn't possible because *there is no Temple anymore*. The death and resurrection of Jesus changed everything.

To put it as plainly as possible, Christians today cannot tithe as instructed in the Law of Moses. It is not possible. They can give a portion of their income to their local church, yes, *but that is not tithing*. Tithing involved giving to Levites and there are no Levites around. It involved bringing food into the Temple and there is no longer a Temple. Have you ever met *anyone* who gave a tenth of their income to a Levite? The truth is that no one has tithed according to the Law of Moses since the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. You *cannot* simply swap out pastors for Levites and churches for the Temple. The New Testament simply does not allow this (which we'll get into a bit later.)

Given this, are Christians required to give a tenth of their income to their local church? It should be clear at this point that giving a tenth of one's income to the local church is not in any way similar to the tithe specified in the Law of Moses. Pastors are not Levites and the local church is not the Temple. Is there a command stating that all Christians must give ten percent of their income to support their local body of believers? I believe the answer is *no* and that the New Testament model is quite different.

Some would argue that there are other examples of tithing apart from the Law of Moses. Take

Jacob as an example:

Genesis 28:20: “And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”

This passage has been used to support tithing, but I believe it actually does the opposite. If Christians are required to tithe then why is Jacob offering to tithe if he returns in peace? After all, if God *already* required Jacob to give a tenth then this whole vow is meaningless! *This is only a gift if Jacob was not already required to give it.* Plus, how did Jacob give the offering to God? There were no priests in those days because Levi had not yet been born – much less Aaron or the other priests. Jacob, a shepherd, must have sacrificed one-tenth of his flocks on an altar. He did not give the animals to his local tabernacle. Are Christians required to take their money into their backyard and burn it, as Jacob did? I've never heard anyone suggest that, but it's worth noting that the animals that Jacob gave did *not* go to support the local priesthood – they were slaughtered and burned on an altar. (It's worth noting that the tithe in Scripture was always a portion of crops or animals, not money; Lev 27:30-32 is a good example of this. There was a monetary tax called the temple tax but that was completely different from the tithe.)

What is entirely missed is that Jacob's vow shows how little faith he really had in God. God had already given Jacob fabulous promises, but instead of believing them Jacob tried to bribe God by saying that *if* God lived up to His end of the bargain then Jacob would pay God back for it. Jacob's tithe was intended to bribe God into fulfilling His promise. Is that really an example that Christians should follow?

Another example that people sometimes use to support tithing appears in Genesis 14:

Genesis 14:18: “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.”

After Abraham returned from conquering the armies that attacked the king of Sodom, he gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek. Some people have claimed that this proves that Christians are required to tithe, but it should be noted that Abraham *gave* tithes. If they were required then he would have *paid* them, which is quite different. A gift is not required – it is given freely. If it is required then it is payment of a debt, not a gift. Nowhere in this passage is it even suggested that Abraham was required to do what he did.

There is also the fact that Abraham was not tithing *his* property. The loot that he was tithing consisted of things he had recovered through his military victory. After Abraham gave the tithe he returned the rest of the loot to the kings of Sodom, which is who the goods had been stolen from. The loot he had tithed belonged to *them*, not to Abraham. There are *no* examples of Abraham actually tithing *things that belonged to him*.

Some would support the idea of mandatory tithing through this verse in Matthew:

Matthew 23:23: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and arise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

What we need to remember is that when Jesus said this He had not yet died – and so the Mosaic law was still in force. Jesus had to perfectly fulfill the entire Mosaic Law, and He did. (It's worth noting that Jesus also commanded the lepers He healed to show themselves to the priests. I have never heard anyone suggest that those healed of skin cancer should go to their local pastor before re-entering society – and yet that is also a command found in the Mosaic Law.)

If Christians were really required to give a tenth of their income to the local church then you would naturally expect that fact to be mentioned *somewhere* in the New Testament, but it's not. *There is not one single verse anywhere in the New Testament that commands Christians to tithe.*

Let me give a few examples. In Acts 4:32-5:11 the Bible talks about the financial support of the new church. Instead of tithing, though, Christians did something quite different:

Acts 4:34: “Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,
35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”

There is also the case of Ananias and Sapphira. This couple sold a piece of property and gave part of the proceeds to the church. When they gave the money, though, they lied and said that they were giving the entire amount that they had received. The Lord killed them for their lying, but it's interesting to notice what Peter said:

Acts 5:4: “Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? ...”

Nowhere did Peter even hint that they owed a tithe on it to the church. This would have been a great place to mention that fact, if it is indeed doctrine, but the passage is silent.

Another passage that has been used to support tithing is this one:

1 Corinthians 16:1: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.”

It is important to notice that Paul is asking the Corinthian church to gather together a sum of money that he can send to *destitute people in Jerusalem*. This is *not* being collected for the support of the local church, nor is any amount or percentage specified. Paul is simply asking the Corinthians to get together and provide for the needs of their brothers and sisters in a distant country. This is *not at all* the

same thing as being required to give ten percent of your income to the local church. Once again, if tithing was required this might have been a good place to mention it, but it wasn't mentioned.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul talks at length about giving, including these famous verses:

1 Corinthians 9:9: "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. ...

14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Yet in this entire chapter Paul never mentions tithing! If Christians are required to give a tenth of their income to the church then this would have been a fabulous place to mention it, but no verse makes that claim. Such a teaching is *entirely absent* from this rather lengthy discussion of giving – and, in fact, it is also absent from *all other discussions on giving in the New Testament*.

So what is going on? The answer to this riddle can be found in 2 Corinthians 9, which says this:

2 Corinthians 9:6: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully,

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

In the Old Testament the Israelites were *required* to give a tenth of their crops and herds to the Levites. Anything that they gave above the tithe was a freewill offering, but the tithe was required. If the tithe was given God would send blessings, and if the tithe was withheld God would send curses and famine. The tithe was not a gift.

In the New Testament things are completely different. God simply wants us to give as we have purposed in our heart, out of love. There is no fixed amount specified, nor does it say that a tenth must be given to the local church before anything can be given to other causes. God wants us to have a heart to meet the needs around us, and to give cheerfully out of love. The real issue is the heart, not percentages.

The truth is that *everything* that we have belongs to God. We are stewards, not owners, and are commanded to use our possessions for the honor and glory of God. All of our wealth and energies and hopes and dreams are to be focused on the Lord's kingdom. God doesn't want a tenth of us; He wants *all* of us.

Christians should look at the financial resources they have been given and use them wisely for the Lord's glory. This doesn't just encompass tithing, but everything – paying bills, raising children, investing in education, buying groceries, and so forth. Can't God be glorified when we pay our debts? When we raise our children? When we instruct others in wisdom? When we provide for those in need? When we bring the gospel to those who need it? God made the oceans, the rivers, the trees, and the fields, but too often Christians view life as being mostly secular with a few religious moments here and there. Being a Christian isn't something that you just do at church; it's the way you live your entire life. It affects how you manage your money, what entertainment you choose, what you do with your free time, how you raise your children, and how you treat your neighbors. For the children of God there is nothing that is purely secular. The Lord has laid a claim to every facet of life, and there is a time for

everything.

God wants us to love and enjoy Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to be passionately devoted to following Him and loving our neighbors. That is what life is all about, and that is what life will *always* be about for the rest of time. God does not want a tenth of us; He wants all of us, devoted completely to Him in every way.

It may be that some people can give more and others can give less; in the parables some servants were given more talents than others. God is not nearly as concerned with the *amount* as He is with the *heart*. That is what it is really all about.

TREASURE IN HEAVEN

This morning I talked to you about the importance of giving your life to Jesus. All too often we use that as a rather meaningless phrase, but the truth is that Jesus really *does* want you to give your life to Him. He wants you to give up who you are to become His servant, dedicated solely to doing His will, glorifying Him, and building His kingdom. God wants all of your heart, all of your passion, and all of your energy. He literally wants you to live for Him.

Tonight we're going to explore one of the facets of what it means to live for Him. Living for Christ means a complete change in the way that we think. It alters our priorities, our desires, our dreams, and our ambitions. It is a complete lifestyle change. It alters who we are and what we do. We can't possibly explore everything that it means in a single sermon, but we can take a look at one piece of it, and the piece that I would like to take a look at is our *stuff*.

In this life people spend a great deal of time getting as much stuff as they possibly can. This is a pretty universal trait for the entire human race. No matter how much stuff we have, people generally want even more. People who have thousands of dollars want millions of dollars; people who have millions want billions; people who have billions want billions more. People spend their entire lives trying to accumulate as much stuff as they possibly can.

Now, some people have responded to this in the past by saying that Christians should take a vow of poverty. They claim that since Jesus was poor then we ought to be poor as well. They condemn the accumulation of stuff and they condemn the wealthy. Wealth, they say, is bad. Christians just shouldn't live like that.

That all sounds very spiritual, but it's not Biblical. God gave Abraham an incredible amount of wealth – so much so that when Lot was carried away captive by an invading army, Abraham trained 318 of his servants in order to defeat the army and rescue his nephew. You've got to be pretty well off if you have more than 300 servants! Likewise, God gave David an incredible amount of wealth – so much so that David donated *billions* of dollars worth of material in order to build the Temple. God also gave Solomon a *staggering* amount of wealth – not because Solomon asked for it, but just because God wanted to. God never chastised any of these people for being wealthy. *Having money is not a sin*.

Jesus had a lot to say about the subject of money, but He never condemned wealth. What He actually did say is quite startling. Jesus told us to **lay up our treasures in Heaven**:

Matthew 6:19-21: “19 Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

There's a lot in these verses and I'd like to take some time to delve into them. First of all, notice that Jesus doesn't prohibit the accumulation of treasure. Jesus has no problem with people storing up wealth. He could easily have said “Don't you dare lay up treasure; that is a sin, and it's bad.” Instead He said something very different: He wants us to lay up our treasures in Heaven instead of Earth.

Now, this verse tends to get spiritualized quite a bit. People read this and assume that it's talking about spiritual blessings. They interpret these verses to mean something like this: “If I work for God then God will bless me spiritually.” That may sound plausible, but it's *not* what the verse means.

Stop and think about it for a moment. Jesus said if we store our treasures on Earth then they are subject to decay and might be stolen; however, if we store them in Heaven then they cannot be stolen and they will last forever. These statements make a lot of sense if we are talking about physical treasure, but they make *no sense at all* if we are talking about spiritual blessings. It is absolutely *impossible* for moths to eat your spiritual blessings or for a thief to steal them. Just take a moment to think through the various spiritual blessings that God has given you. God has promised us eternal security in Christ; can a moth eat that? God has promised to always be with us and to never forsake us; can a burglar steal that promise while we're away on vacation? Of course not! The only things that moths can eat and thieves can steal are *physical goods*. Christ is saying exactly what He seems to be saying: we should relocate our physical goods to Heaven so that they can't be stolen. In other words, God wants us to use Heaven like an *offshore bank account*.

I realize this sounds crazy, but that's because we have a very unbiblical view of Heaven. When many people think of Heaven they picture a big white place with lots of clouds and harps, where people spend eternity strumming their harp and not really doing much else. That picture of Heaven is *not remotely Biblical*. The place that the Bible describes is completely different – and the Bible actually spends a great deal of time describing it. The Bible has far more to say about Heaven than we realize, and it's a real shame that we get most of our ideas about Heaven from Hollywood.

First of all, Heaven is not a vague place with clouds. The Bible tells us that ***Heaven is actually a city***:

Hebrews 11:16: “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

What has God prepared for us? *A city*. Notice that it doesn't say “a cloud”! We are *not* going to spend eternity floating on a cloud somewhere; we're going to spend it living *in a city*. The last two chapters of the Bible spend a lot of time describing this Heavenly city, which the Bible names “the New Jerusalem”. This incredibly large city has trees, and streets, and a stream, and walls, and food, and God Himself.

Now, all of us know a great deal about cities; after all, most people have spent their lives living in a city or near one. One of the things we know about cities is that they have places for people to live, and the New Jerusalem is no different. The Bible tells us exactly what we can expect as far as living accommodations go:

John 14:2: “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”

I realize that a lot of modern Bible translations have rendered this verse as “many rooms”, and I think that's deplorable. I don't have time right now to delve into why that's the case, but I can say that Jesus is *not* talking about rooms here. Jesus is not saying “When you get to Heaven I've got a spare closet that you can spend eternity living in.” That's ridiculous! The New Jerusalem is full of *homes*. It is an enormous city that covers more than *2 million square miles*. God is not hurting for space, and He does not have to stuff all of us in closets in order to make room for everybody. Do you seriously believe that your home on Earth, regardless of how nice it is, can even remotely compare to what God Himself has spent *two thousand years* preparing for you?

On top of that, I assure you that when you reach your heavenly home you are not going to find a big building that is completely empty. You are not going to spend eternity wandering around an empty

building, wishing you had a chair to sit on. Houses are furnished on Earth and they will be furnished in Heaven. They will have *things* inside them. There is nothing wrong with this; physical goods are not evil. If they were then Jesus would not be urging you to accumulate them in Heaven.

So, then, in Heaven you will have a place to live and your home will have stuff in it. What Jesus is saying in these verses is that you should take the stuff that you have here and relocate it to Heaven so that you will still have it when you reach Heaven. It's true that you cannot take it with you, but you *can* send it up ahead. That is the point of this passage.

Now, I'm not saying that there is some magical way you can mail your baseball card collection to Heaven so that you can have it in the ages to come. You cannot take your favorite shirt and mail it to the New Jerusalem so that you'll have it in the future. There is no way to actually move an item from this world into the next. However, there *are* ways that you can use your Earthly possessions in order to lay up real, actual treasures in your Heavenly home.

Now, there are some people who claim that there's no such thing as treasure in Heaven because in Heaven everyone is equal and everyone has exactly the same thing. They reject the idea that some people in Heaven might have more than other people, or that some people might have a higher status than others. This is a very common belief, but it's not Biblical. In fact, I Corinthians 3 says quite the opposite:

I Corinthians 3:11-15: "11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

This passage is clearly saying that every man's work will be tested, and anything that does not pass the test will be lost. A reward will be given to some people, and it will *not* be given to others. You see, **God actually cares how we spend our lives**, and He will reward us accordingly. God is not going to say "Bob spent his life faithfully serving me, while Fred spent his entire life lying drunk on the floor; I'm going to give them both the same reward because I don't care what they did with their time." That's insane. As Paul explains, people who wasted their lives will still be saved, but they will suffer loss. They will attain eternal life but they will receive no reward. Those who faithfully served God, though, *will* be rewarded. The idea that "everyone will have the same thing" is just not Biblical.

So just how *do* you lay up treasure in Heaven? One key way is to **give to the poor**:

Matthew 19:21: "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

Luke 12:31: "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure

in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.
34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Jesus is *very* clear about this: if you give to the poor then you *will* have treasure in Heaven. Jesus does not say “you might”, but “you *will*”. This is a guaranteed, ironclad way of transferring your wealth from this life into the next. If you give to the poor then God will give you “bags which wax not old”, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail.

There are countless ways that we can give to the poor in the name of Christ. This church in particular is really great when it comes to giving to the poor; there are all sorts of opportunities all throughout the year. In fact, every time we have communion the offering goes straight to feeding the poor. The Navajo bucket ministry was another opportunity to give to the poor. If you don't want to wait until another opportunity comes up you could always give to Compassion International. They are a highly competent and respected Christian ministry that cares for poor people all over the world. They offer many ways to give – ranging from sponsoring a child to providing a family with clean water. If you want to give to the poor then there are a *lot* of poor people out there, and there are a lot of ways to do it. You really don't have to look very hard.

Now, I'd like to point out once again that Christ describes this Heavenly treasure as something that is *real and tangible*. He talks about bags that do not wear out and goods that are not eaten by moths. If Christ was talking spiritual blessings He could easily have said “Seek the kingdom of God and you will be drawn closer to God, which is your reward.”, but that's *not* what He said. Instead He talked as if the treasure was some type of physical good that would ordinarily be subject to the wear and tear of this life. (There is a reason for this, and I will get to it, but you'll have to wait until the end. Just be patient and bear with me.)

Another key way to amass Heavenly treasure is **to be persecuted for serving God:**

Matthew 5:11: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.”

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Luke 6:22: “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.”

23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”

If you are persecuted and suffer for the sake of Christ then you will be rewarded. In fact, your reward in Heaven will be *great*. Keep in mind that *Jesus*, the creator of the Universe, is the one who is saying “Yes, your reward will be truly astonishing.” *God* is the one who is saying that your reward will be so amazing and mind-blowing that you should be leaping for joy. You have hit the jackpot; you have it made.

As Americans we're really not very persecuted. Our life is nothing like those who live in nations like Iran, where being a Christian can send you to jail or get you killed. We simply don't face situations like that here. However, that is rapidly changing. The day will come when we will suffer greatly for being faithful to Christ and standing by His Word. When that day comes, Jesus commands us to *leap for joy* because of the great reward that we will have in Heaven.

Now, a lot of Christians have this idea that rewards are somehow unspiritual or bad. Some people claim that wanting a reward is a sign of immaturity. I'd like to point out that the person who commands us to *want* these rewards and *get excited* over them is actually *Jesus Himself* – and He said this not once, but *twice*. He *wants* us to be excited about what He's going to give us.

This really shouldn't surprise us. After all, how would you feel if you gave a present to someone and found out that they weren't excited about it, didn't particularly want it, and were bored with the whole thing? Isn't it much better when you give a gift that you *know* is wanted and longed for, and will be enjoyed and appreciated? Do you really want to give someone a gift just to hear them say “No thanks; I'm not interested. I'm too spiritual to care about gifts. Just keep it.”? Of course not – and God doesn't want that either. God is going to give us something, and He really does *not* want us to spend our lives saying “No thanks; I don't want it.”. That attitude does not honor God.

We've talked about amassing Heavenly treasure by giving to the poor, and about amassing it by being persecuted for following Christ. There is another way to amass treasure, and that is to receive the servants of God as who they are, or by helping others in the name of God:

Matthew 10:40: “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

This isn't as difficult as you might think. As the world becomes a darker place, the world will pressure us to distance ourselves from people who are the faithful servants of God. When the prophets were alive they were hated; people despised them, refused to hear what they had to say, and executed them. Those who stood by the prophets and supported them were doing something daring, and God promised to reward them. Likewise, when we stand by the faithful people of God and help them, instead of joining with the world to attack them, then God will reward us.

Also, as you can see, helping others in the name of God will result in a reward. Giving a cup of water in the name of Christ is not as hard as it seems. Compassion International actually has a program where they give water filters to families and villages that provides them with a clean and disease-free source of water – and they do so in the name of Christ, and use it as an opportunity to share the gospel. Their website allows you to sponsor a water filter for a family for \$50. That filter can provide a *lifetime* of clean water for a family that otherwise would not have it.

The reason I mention this isn't to single Compassion out, but to say that the world is full of people who need help, and there is no shortage of opportunities to help them. If we are willing to act then there is a lot that we can do.

Now that we've spent some time discussing *how* you amass rewards, I'd like to talk about an entirely different class of rewards. One of the things the Bible says is that it is possible to earn certain types of crowns. These crowns are not crowns of authority (although we will reign on the Earth) but crowns of victory. The Bible refers to these as **incorruptible crowns**:

I Corinthians 9:24: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

As you can see, you have to *earn* these crowns. Some people will get them and some people won't. Paul urges us to run the race faithfully and to discipline ourselves so that when we are judged we will not come away empty-handed. If you want an incorruptible crown then you are going to have to work for it. You see, God puts a difference between Christians who live faithfully for Christ and Christians who don't. Those who serve well will be rewarded, and those who couldn't be bothered will not. The way that we live our lives, and the choices that we make, really does matter.

One of the crowns that we can earn is the **crown of righteousness**:

2 Timothy 4:7: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth is laid up for me a **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

This crown is an easy one to earn: all you have to do is long for the return of Christ. Those who are looking forward to the Rapture and who eagerly want Jesus to return will be given the crown of righteousness. That's all you have to do.

The sad truth is that if Christ were to return today there would be very few people who would receive this crown. There are many Christians in the world today who do not want Jesus to come back. They are actually terrified that Jesus might come back at any minute and interrupt all the stuff they have going on. They want Jesus to stay away until they've finished their plans and have accomplished everything they want to do. If God were to send us a message saying that He would return at noon tomorrow, a great many Christians would be beside themselves because that would interrupt their plans. The things of the world have so ensnared us that many people see the return of Christ as a serious problem.

This is a truly terrible attitude to have. Imagine a bride telling her groom “No, I really don't want to marry you just yet. I've got a life to live, and things to do, and dreams to accomplish, and you are just a hindrance to all of that. You just need to stay away until I'm done.” No groom is going to be happy about hearing that – and Christ does not want to hear it from His Bride either. He wants us to long for His return, to eagerly hope for it, and to wish each day that perhaps today He would finally come for us.

Think of it this way: is your life, and your dreams, and your desires, really more important than the *Rapture*, the *raising of the dead*, and the translation of all saints into *incorruptible immortals*? I mean, *really*? You are more important than all of that? You want Christ to delay coming back and rescuing all the Christians all over the world who are being *persecuted, tortured, and executed* just so you can finish your plans? You are so important that you want all those people to keep on suffering just so you're not inconvenienced? If you seriously believe that then you have issues.

Those who long for the return of Christ will receive the crown of righteousness; those who do not will not receive it.

Another type of crown is the **crown of life**:

James 1:12: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

Revelation 2:10: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

As we can see, the crown of life is given to those who *endure temptation*. Christ wants us to love Him, and the way we show our love for Him is by keeping His commandments (John 14:15). This means that those who keep His commandments prove that they really do love Him. Those who endure temptation and defeat it, choosing to walk in the ways of God instead of the ways of the flesh, will be given the crown of life. In other words, the way that you live your life *really matters*. It is not ok to just keep living in sin. God does put a difference between those who fight and overcome sin, and those who can't be bothered.

Peter speaks of the third type of crown – the **crown of glory**:

I Peter 5:1: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

The only people who are eligible to receive this crown are pastors, evangelists, and elders. This crown is given to church leaders who faithfully and selflessly take care of the Church. Those who are good examples, who preach the whole Word, who take care of the flock, and who do so not for wealth and power but out of an earnest desire to help, will receive a crown of glory. On the other hand, those who are faithless, or who set a terrible example, or who preach heresy, or who abuse the flock for their own gain, will lose this crown. Once again we see that faithfulness is rewarded. God really does care about what you're doing.

Some people will receive these crowns, and other people will go away empty-handed. Jesus Himself said that we must be careful because these crowns *can* be lost:

Revelation 3:11: “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

Now, our *salvation* cannot be lost and *eternal life* cannot be lost, so Christ is not talking about either of those. What *can* be lost are our crowns, because they are rewards for a life well-lived. This also puts crowns in a bit of a different category from other Heavenly treasure. If you give to the poor then God will reward you, and that reward cannot be lost no matter what. Crowns, though, are trickier to earn because they can only be earned by a lifetime of faithful service. They are harder to get, and few people will get them.

The idea of being rewarded for our service makes some people uncomfortable, but *this is*

Christ's idea, not our own. God is *not* doing something wrong by generously rewarding people. We also need to keep in mind what people in Heaven will do with these rewards. On Earth people earn rewards by faithfully serving God. In Heaven people will take their rewards and use them to bring glory and honor to God:

Revelation 4:9-11: “9 And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever,
10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

What are these people doing with their crowns? They are casting them before the throne of God and worshiping Him. The Lord had glorified them, and they have used their glory to worship the Father.

Which brings us back to where we started this morning. God wants us to use the possessions that He has given us to honor Him. When we do that – when we give to the poor, help others in the name of Christ, and suffer for His name – then God has promised to reward us. When we get to Heaven and receive the rewards that God chose to give us, we will take them and use them to glorify God – which is how we got them in the first place.

So, spend your life serving God. Lay up rewards in Heaven. Provide for yourself bags that do not wax old, and an incorruptible crown that does not fade away – so that when the day comes, you can honor the Lord and glorify Him with all the things He has given you.

When we glorify God, the Lord will reward us in Heaven. When we receive our reward in Heaven, we will use it to glorify God. You might say that the reason God rewards us is so we can use that reward to glorify Him. Of course, you have to *have* a reward in order to do that, don't you? After all, you can't cast your crown before the Throne if you don't have a crown in the first place.

EXCERPT: SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD

The wrath of God is like great waters that are damned for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is

provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. . . .

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires. Nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. "Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them" (Ezek. 8:18). Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only "laugh and mock" (Prov. 1:25, 26, etc.).

How awful are those words which are the words of the great God. "I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment" (Is. 63:3). It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, viz. contempt, and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favour, that instead of that, he will only tread you under foot. And though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you, in the utmost contempt: no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet to be trodden down as the mire of the streets. . . .

You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Is. 66:23, 24). . . .

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left

behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition?

--Jonathan Edwards