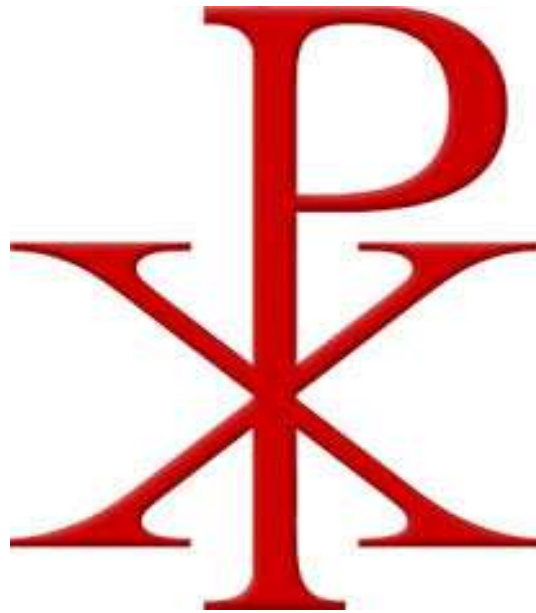


BEHOLD HIS GLORY

REFLECTIONS ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST



**John 1:14 We beheld his glory, the glory
as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**

BROOKY STOCKTON, PHD

BEHOLD HIS GLORY

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The Chi Rho Cross contains the first two Greek letters in the name of Christ. The Rho is shaped like a shepherd's hook as a symbol of our Lord's saving work accomplished at the cross. The Chi is shaped like an X or the "St. Andrews" cross which stands as a symbol of resistance to tyranny, Kingly authority, and the Sovereignty of Christ.

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PREFACE

John 17:24 . . . that they may behold my glory,

The final prayer of our Lord on earth requested the Father to enable men “to see His glory.”

Amazingly, considering His extraordinary claims, men believed on Him – 1 Timothy 3:16.

We think too much of ourselves, and not enough of Christ. And, when we do think of Him, our thoughts are way too small. He is greater than any of us can imagine!

The great need among men is not more self-esteem, but more Christ esteem; not a better occupation, but more occupation with the Savior. “The joy of the LORD is our strength,” and the joy of the LORD is the glory of His Son.

If the greatest sin a man can commit is the neglect of the Son (Hebrews 2:1-3), then the greatest investment a man can make is to behold the wonders of the Son.

As a young Christian, I was raised among the Plymouth Brethren who correctly emphasized worship at the Lord’s Supper. I would sit in those meetings and listen to the older men share the most wonderful thoughts about Christ. Stirred to the core, I plunged into the Scriptures like a miner searching for gold. It was at these services I learned how much the Lord loved a sinner like me.

This work is a collection of unedited notes, devotional thoughts, seminary lectures, and sermons on the **Beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ**. It is a weak work unworthy of His greatness, but it contains a lifetime of my study about our Savior. Truly, “*there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*” (John 21:25).

This is not a perfect, complete work by any means, but in these notes you will find food for your soul, gems about Christ, nuggets from history, and golden theology about the Savior.

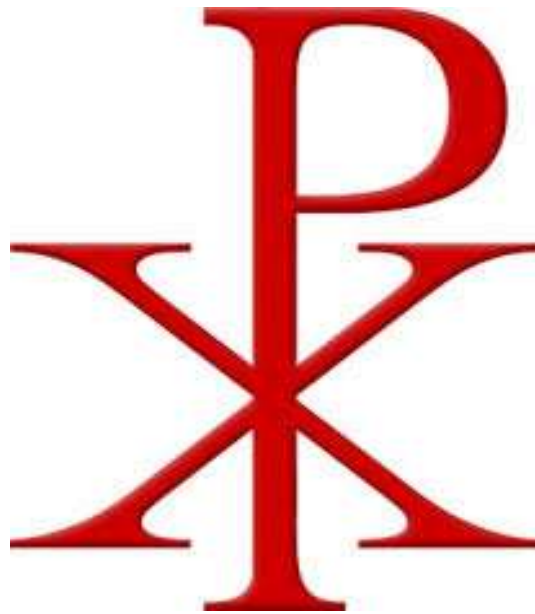
It is not meant to be read as a novel, but as contemplation about the glories of our Lord.

Forget super-hero movies, and alleged alien invasions from outer space. Nothing compares to the wonder of God in Christ walking among us. May you Behold His Glory as you read this work.

Brooky Stockton, PHD

BEHOLD HIS GLORY

SECTION I



1. THINK MORE OF JESUS

Colossians 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Which of us besides a nuclear scientist truly understands the mega tons of power locked in an atom? Split a single atom and a nuclear explosion could level New York City.

Likewise, our text expounds a great truth regarding explosive power compacted in the Savior—that in Christ dwells all the fullness of Deity. Inside that small mass of a living, breathing, flesh and blood human being was the Divine nature, **the Divine essence**.

But, our Lord was more than this. **The fullness** of the Divine nature was in Him. Yet, there is more: **All** the fullness of the Divine nature was in Him. Selah!

The text is not telling us that Jesus was like God or that Jesus had a spark of Divinity with him or that He shared a few of God’s transitive attributes. The text hums with cosmic power.

“All” implies the whole universe of what God is in Christ. The whole “lock, stock, and barrel” of the essence of Deity dwells in bodily form; the “whole shebang” of the nature of the Godhead is in Jesus’ humanity. Christ was totally man, but He was also totally God!

The Lord announced to Philip “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Only one man in history could say that and still be true.

The word “Godhead” (*theotatos*) does not refer to Divine attributes as does the term “Godhead” (Theiotes) in Romans 1:20. Rather, it refers to the essence of what it means to be God. In Christ dwelt the core, the kernel, the substance of Divinity. God is spirit and that spirit was in Christ.

A good man may manifest a Divine attribute like kindness or mercy, but no man can say that in him dwells the *theotatos*, the very essence of the Divine nature. “*In Him was life, and the life was the light of man,*” declared John.

The term “fullness” is a naval term referring to a full crew on a ship; that is, a fully equipped vessel. The use of the noun “fullness” informs us that Christ was fully God.

We sometimes say jokingly about an inept person that they are a few cards short of a full deck or one egg short of a dozen. But, not so with Jesus! Whatever it means to have the essence of God, Jesus had the full deck—the “lock, stock, and barrel” of what it means to be Divine.

Paul is not saying all of God was in Jesus, but he is saying that the true and full essence of God's unique nature was fully in Jesus in bodily form.

In Christ, the infinite was in the finite; the eternal in the temporal; the spiritual in the physical; Deity in humanity. All the intransitive attributes of the Divine nature made their home in Christ.

Is the Father omniscient? So is Christ! Is God omnipotent? So is Christ! Is God omnipresent? Somehow, someway Christ shared the Divine nature.

The knowledge and the power and the presence that created the Earth, the moon, the Sun, the Milky Way, and the billions of spiral galaxies and global clusters was in Christ, on Earth, in bodily form.

Our thoughts of Jesus are too small! We have too much self-esteem and not enough Christ-esteem.

Jesus is more than a good teacher, more than a prophet, He is fully God and fully man.

Think more of Jesus! His name is "Wonderful!" He deserves honor, but more than honor. He deserves worship—for "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."

Need completeness? Come to Christ! Let us never use His name in vain and let us never be ashamed to be called a "Christian" for in the Lord Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.

2. JESUS IS THE SWEETEST NAME I KNOW

Matthew 1:21 “ . . . thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

It has become fashionable today by Zionist Christians to use the name *Yeshua* instead of the sweet English name "Jesus."

"Jesus is the sweetest name I know," penned Lela Long circa 1925. What a lovely author! All we know about Lela Long was that Jesus was the sweetest name she knew. Oh, if only I had that reputation!

Frederick Whitfield wrote the following in 1855:

"There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth; it sounds like music in my ear, the sweetest Name on Earth"

His first stanza, "*I need Thee precious Jesus, for I am full of sin*" was omitted without Whitfield's sanction. Even then, people rejected the truth that men are sinners in need of a Savior.

But, millions of sinners have come to Calvary and found love and forgiveness through the wonderful name of Jesus. Yet, carnal men have taken that lovely name and turned it into a curse word. And, the Christian heart is grieved! Jewish zealots denigrate the name as if they possess superior Hebrew insights that grant them authority to nullify that Sacred Appellation.

Let's take a look at the sweetest name I know:

"Jesus" is the English translation and pronunciation of our Lord's Greek name (Yeshua or Iesou). It is pronounced in Greek as "heysue." It is used 942 times in the NT. The hard "J" sound is because of the Reformers adopted a German pronunciation. The "I" is "J" in German. The "I" is pronounced like a raspy "H" in Spanish, kind of like the "h" in the English word "hot."

Men did not give Christ the name *Jesus*. The name "Jesus" was given to him by God the Father (Matthew 1:21). *Iesou* is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *Joshua* or *Jehoshua* or *Yeshua* (Joshua. 1:1; Zechariah 3:1).

The root word of *Jehoshua* means "to save" or "YHWH is salvation." Jesus is God's Son and His name means, "the Savior." He is God's salvation. The OT name *Joshua* was a common

name among Hebrews and is pronounced *Yeshua* by some in America. But, Jesus was not called “Yeshua” in the New Testament or in first century Christianity. Selah!

The Spirit of God was pleased to take the Hebrew name *Yeshua* and to translate it into the Greek as *Iasou* (genitive masculine) where it is properly pronounced “heysue” or “heysous” depending on the Greek ending. Greek suffixes vary depending on the usage of a word in a sentence.

The Spirit of God chose not to transliterate the Hebrew name of our Savior as “Yeshua” in the Greek New Testament (church age). The Spirit **ordained** “Yeshua” be translated into its Greek word equivalent, and I am sure that He is pleased with all translation work that honors that sweet name.



Further, that lovely name was never used alone after His resurrection and is always connected with the title “Christ” (Christos) or “Lord” (Kurios). His name is first mentioned in the New Testament in Matthew 1:1 as *Vlhsou/ Cristou/*. The first two letters of Christ in Greek are the Chi and Rho (looks like a “p” but has all the characteristics of the “r” in English). Thus, the Chi Rho cross was designed from the first two letters in Christ’s name. Today, it is called the Constantine Cross or the Victor’s Cross. It is reported that at the Battle of Mivian Bridge in northern Rome, the emperor saw this sign in the heavens and heard the words, “In Hoc Signo Vinces” (in this sign you shall conquer.” The Chi symbolizes Christ is the center of all things, and by Him all things hold together. The Rho, formed like a staff, suggests Christ is our Shepherd Who saves and leads us.

His proper title today is “**The Lord Jesus Christ,**” or *kuriou Iesou Christou* (Philippians 1:2), and it is the Sweetest Name I know!

It has become trendy in some circles to refer to Jesus as “Yeshua” today.

Though it is not heresy to do so, let us remember that the NT saints called him by his Greek name, *kuriou Iesou christou*, “the Lord Jesus Christ” in English, and not His Hebrew name, *Yeshua*. That is, ***we honor the Spirit's intent using the name of "Jesus" rather than transliterating His Hebrew name when reading translations of the New Testament.***

There is a dangerous pattern among Messianic Jewish Zionist zealots to promote the authority of the Old Testament above the New, instead of properly asserting the New Testament as the authority of the Old. When they do so, they are denigrating the most precious name Christians know.

3. THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our precious Lord taught us to pray, “Thy Kingdom Come.” It is part of the Lord’s Prayer a.k.a. the “Disciples’ Prayer.” Positively, it is a plea that all men and all man’s institutions would surrender to the authority of Christ; negatively, it is coup de’etat against godless authorities and de facto officials.

This is the rebel’s prayer—a revolutionary’s cry against the immorality of this age and the promotion of wickedness by men in rebellion against the Creator. This prayer is God’s permission to resist evil, to take the high road, and swim against the stream; it allows men to shout “No King, but King Jesus.” It is permission to adopt the motto “one nation under one God and one absolute law.”

It is a prayer against the belief that man is god; that government is god; that man’s law or their constitutions are absolute.

It is a prayer against the status quo where ambitious men seek to advance the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. It is a prayer against abortion, oppression, homosexuality, pornography, and greed.

It is a prayer against secularism, atheism, humanism, socialism, Marxism and every other ism wherein secularists seek to build a city where man is the measure of all things.

It is a prayer against rulers in rebellion against “the LORD and His Anointed”—against governments who seek to enslave and control men through coercion, intimidation, and fear.

It is a prayer against governments hostile to the maxim that the Bible is the Source of all Law; and, it is a prayer against governments that break their own laws.

It is a prayer against unjust laws and legislators “who do mischief through law” by creating a system of man-made statutes and codes that enslave their citizenry [Ps. 94:20]; who seek to create a new world order through law; who promote alien laws that undermine the Ten Commandments and the virtues they advance: faithfulness, justice, and mercy.

It is a prayer against those who defraud others; against rulers that steal from the people through color of law; against unlawful taxation that transfers power from the family to the State.

If you are angry at godless politicians, this prayer is for you: “Lord, Thy kingdom Come.”

4. THE ARM OF THE LORD

Isaiah 53

This text reveals the maximum force output of the “Arm of the Lord” exerted at Calvary to save sinners.

Every word ripples with power. Entire New Testament themes regarding the person and work of our Lord are compressed into the beef and brawn of these phrases.

The text begins with a question, “to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

All the wisdom, knowledge, eternal power, force, and vigor of the durable, incorruptible, strength, and bone-crushing muscle of God is a reference to the Babe in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling clothes, and are summed up in Isaiah’s Messianic metaphor, “the arm of the Lord.” He is none other than “El-Shaddai,” – a brawny title derived from the male deltoids, biceps, and pectoral muscle groups.

The answer to the question “to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed” is directed at the disciples.

The Messiah’s humanity, purity, vulnerability, innocence, sensitivities, and gentleness are contained in the description, “He grew up before him as a tender shoot.”

The “dry ground” references the abusive, unfriendly, ungodly, chilly, censorious and hostile depravity of Jesus’ opponents. He was God’s King carving out a kingdom built on moral power.

When the disciples met the Christ, there was nothing unusual about his appearance. He was not physically bigger or more handsome than other men. There was no outstanding manly beauty that lured men to Him. He was not the kind of man people would have voted for the title of Mr. Universe, but there was no criticism of him being effeminate. He was in all respects, a man’s man, an Alpha male with male characteristics. While polite, He was anything but a push over.

In his external form and body, he was a normal, commonplace, garden-variety Hebrew. All the depictions of a chiseled, well-groomed Christ or one with soft Shakti features by painters are creations of men and not Divinely inspired.

But, in spirit, His masculine, strength, power, wisdom, and ax-grinding confrontation bulldozed its way through the citadels of Jewish corruption conquering hardened hearts.

The title “man of sorrows acquainted with grief” embraces all of our Lord’s suffering and the spiritual hypertrophy He experienced due to the distresses, agitations, cares, pressures, burdens, afflictions, grievances, heartbreaks, disappointments, hurts, strains and pains that He endured among the Jews of that day.

The nation’s stunning ridicule, disdain, neglect, scorn, snobbery, hate, and contempt for Christ by the Jews is compressed into the phrases “He was despised” and we “esteemed him not.”

The phrase “He has born our grief and carried our sorrows” refers to His broad-shouldered power to dead lift the burdens and distress that weighs down humanity.

On top of this, the disciples observed that not only did Christ suffer because of the “contradiction of sinners against himself,” but a unique suffering labeled “smitten of God” became the optimum strength test during his agony on the cross.

To suffer at the hands of men is one matter, but suffering caused by Heaven itself is quite another.

To endure abuse by irascible men takes manly strength, but to endure the punishment of an offended deity takes the muscular grit of El-Shaddai (Genesis 17:1).

Some men are called to endure the anger of men, but the “arm of the Lord” endured the wrath of God.

Our Lord’s feverish agony and “chastisement” at the cross caused by the weight our sins, godlessness, rebellion, delinquency, neglects, immorality, malfeasance, prurience, pride, fleshly attractions, promiscuity, concupiscence, perversity, obscenity, profanity, vulgarity, sensuality, anger, wrath, dissensions, slander, contumelies, sedition and the like are squeezed into terms like “our transgressions” and “our iniquities”(Galatians 5:19ff).

The phrases “wounded” and “bruised for our iniquities” reference our Lord’s entire endurance test at the cross including his whippings, beatings, impalement, discomfort, pains, throes, agony, misery, passion, torment, bleeding, thirst, mental and emotional and physical anguish.

The phrase by “his stripes are we healed” refers to life-saving benefits procured by our Lord’s perseverance at the cross, and includes the gleaming benedictions of salvation, reconciliation, forgiveness, justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, and resurrection from the dead.

All these salvic cures are needed because of the infirmities and disorders caused by man eating fruit from the Poisonous Tree.

The entire history of Adam's autonomous race with its shameful sin and rebellion against God is simply summed up as "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way" (53:6).

We can do a lot worse, but we can hardly do better than to consider the maximum power output the "Arm of the Lord" exerted at Calvary to save sinners.

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing, my great Redeemer's praise."

5. SEVEN SHOCKING STATEMENTS

SURROUNDING THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR

Everything about the birth of Christ is wonderful . . . even shocking.

However, because of modern commercialism surrounding the season, we may forget how stunning were the events surrounding the birth of our Lord.

Here are seven shocking facts about the Christmas story.

First, the shock of the baby's purpose.

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Some men are born to be engineers or statesmen, but Jesus was born to be the Savior of the world. The name "Jesus" comes from the OT name "Joshua" which means "Yeshua is our Savior."

This Savior had to die for the sins of men; that is, he was born to die.

Men define enemies as political opponents or criminal persons. In the Mediterranean world, Caesar and the Roman State were regarded as a savior from social disorder and political upheaval.

Here sin is announced as the number one enemy of mankind and Jesus as the Savior of humanity -- a shocking revelation to the Greek world, and a truth that stumbles modern society.

People feel the need to be saved from financial troubles, health problems, and marriage difficulties . . . but who is crying out to God to be delivered from the power of sin?

Few today feel the need to be saved from horrors of Adam's sin, but those who do, Jesus is the Answer. He is the one who does the saving.

Second, the shock that this baby was the LORD God.

Luke 1:41-43 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: [42](#) And she spake

out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

Elizabeth, along with in all Jews, ritually cited the Shema which contained the paramount truth that the LORD was Elohim, the one and only God of Israel (Deuteronomy 6:4).

But here, Elizabeth perceives that the baby in the womb of Mary was the LORD incarnate, the God-man, the Creator of heaven and earth. What a shock it must have been to Mary to hear these words for the first time!

Moreover, Paul explains the incarnation as the "mystery of godliness that God was manifest in the flesh . . ." (1 Timothy 3:16).

Third, the shock that a virgin would give birth to a son.

Luke 1:37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

A virgin having a baby? "Impossible" says the modern skeptic!

Well, it was shocking to Mary also! And, the angel had to assure her that she was not dreaming or hallucinating; that with God nothing is impossible!

If there is no God, the skeptic is correct. But, if there is a God, an impregnation by the Holy Spirit is more than possible with Him.

The virgin birth was biological-theological necessity. In order for Jesus to save the world from sin, He had to be the holy Son free from the power of sin that defiles human nature.

That He was born the Holy One, the Son of God, the earthly son of Virgin Mary still shocks the thinking man.

Fourth, the shock that Mary's story was true . . . or is that a huge hoax?

Matthew 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

The word "fear" summarizes the whirlwind of conflicting emotions that invaded the heart of Joseph on the day he found out Mary was with child.

Think of the mental state of Joseph. His espoused wife, whom he trusted, whom he believed was pure, announced to him that she was pregnant. Who can imagine his anger, frustration, and sense

of betrayal and the emotional tornado that ripped through his soul following Mary's announcement to him?

Joseph was not only shocked by the announcement that his bride was pregnant, he was riveted by a dream wherein an angel confirmed to him that not only was Mary's pregnancy real, but that her "baby bump" was the result of the work of the Holy Spirit and not the result of indiscretion with another man.

Fifth, the shock that angels appeared to shepherds and not to statesmen.

Luke 2:8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. **10** And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

The birth of Christ is undoubtedly the greatest event in history. However, only about a dozen people knew about it.

It would be shocking for any of us to come face-to-face with an angel. Furthermore, I can't think of anything that has happened in my life time that would gain the attention of angels. Angels fell from heaven like stars with great interest and readiness to assist the birth and mission of Christ (1 Timothy 3:16).

Moreover, the angel did not announce the birth of the Savior to politicians, the affluent, or to government employees . . . but to common, "blue-collar" shepherds. Christ is for the regular man, not for the sophisticated elite -- a shock to the ancient world as well as modern man who looks to the State as the agent of change.

Be humble or stumble!

Sixth, that salvation is in a Person and not a system.

Luke 2:30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

When Simeon saw the baby in Mary's arms, he called Jesus, "Thy Salvation."

Salvation is not in the government or the presidency or some religious system, but in a Person, the Person of Christ.

What a shock to men then and now who look for salvation in some new world political order or a temple in the mountains of Tibet.

Seventh, the shock that this baby would be the King of kings.

Matthew 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

The Magi recognize Christ as King of the Jews -- a shocking statement in a time when the nation saw Herod as the only, legitimate king of the Jews. No wonder Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.

To the devout Hebrew mind, the LORD God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, was the true King of the Jews.

In addressing Christ as King of the Jews, the Holy Spirit wants us to see Jesus as Israel's Lawgiver, Judge, and King (Isaiah 33:22); that He is the King of the Nations (Jeremiah 10:7); the Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15); and, the Prince of the Rulers of the Nations (Revelation 1:5).

Just as the church looks to Christ as its Head, the nations should look to Christ as their civil Ruler, Authority, and King; that is, to see themselves as accountable to him -- a radical position so shocking, modern politicians scramble to resist and won't dare confess.

That senators, representatives, judges, and presidents should surrender to the authority of Christ the King ascended to the right hand of God is more than these tiny, little minds can bear.

So shocking was this truth in the first century it turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6-7).

It is still so shocking, you will not hear politicians, president, congresswomen, or judges admit they are accountable to this King.

Maybe, this is why he appeared to humble shepherds and not to proud civil rulers.

6. THE STABLE

By Brooky Stockton

On this chilly, winter night, a tiny flickering candle exposes unswept stable stalls.

A needy family sprawls on hay aside livestock, resting together in this crude, make-shift nursery!

Urine-soaked compost ground into powder, a distinctive stench of ammonia, hay, and silage rise from the stable floor.

Be careful where you step!

Oh, so dirty!

The bearded man on the straw wears unlaundered, sweat-stained, country vestments splotted with soil and dust.

His cloak is too smudged and worn to suggest wealth.

Oh, so dirty!

The pensive mother, purity in her eyes, wears a stained, linen dress, draped with a woven, weathered, wool shawl.

Nestled delicately on unhygienic hay, she convalesces from the stress of child birth.

Oh, so dirty!

Next to her lies a newborn infant on a spit-stained feeding trough, glutted with short twigs of dried chaff, and carefully swaddled in cheap linen.

A *mandere* for a royal throne!

Oh, so dirty!

In the distance coos a twitter-warble swallow; near — a milking goat with shaggy hair hanging from her shank, the old cow dripping mucous from wet nostrils moos while chewing the cud, a matted ewe and lamb nestled on straw, a long-eared donkey with a dusty, hirsute coat, and dried tear-stains crusted to its cheeks naps a-hoof while tethered to a wooden post, and a few chickens clucking,

Embrace this silent night.

But, oh so dirty!

Why Bethlehem?
Why this child?
Why this night?
Why this dirty stable?

A pregnant woman traveling 90 miles, riding, rocking, bobbing on the back of a burro?
A daughter of a king in a stable on a bed of hay?
A virgin birthing a son attended by sheep and goats?
Oh, so dirty! So, very, very dirty!

The Lord made the light to shine in the darkness,
and He brought us to this dirty stable, to see His Holy Son,
Who saves believing sinners from their dirty sins.
“Oh, how God loves us!” smiled the shepherd.
(December 2018)

7. THE FIVE NOTS OF CHRISTMAS

Of all phobias, fear is the most common knot that binds men (ABC News).

Fear is such a common human response that there are over 6381 quotes on one website to assist readers to overcome human phobias that afflict people in the course of life.

The presence of fear is often associated with religion. There is a healthy fear that should be on all men in their contemplation of God. To fear God is the essence of mental health.

*Deuteronomy 5:29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to **fear** me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!*

Sin and guilt turn fear rancid. If fear oxidizes our soul, it can be all over us like stink on a skunk.

Christmas is the turning point of history, and it has turned Christians right side up.

Christmas ought to be a time to cleanse our souls and untangle us from the fears that rob us of joy in the service of Christ.

Reflection on the birth of Christ can deliver men from *fear knots* because of the “**fear nots**” in the Christmas story.

Tradition informs us that entering the temple was so terrifying, the Levites would tie a rope on the leg of a high priest so if he was struck dead because of his sins in the priestly service, they could pull him out without endangering their own lives.

One: While performing duties of a priest in the temple, an angel appeared to Zechariah stirring fear within, but the angel who provided comfort, admonished him to not be afraid.

*Luke 1:13 But the angel said unto him, **Fear not**, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*

Two: When the angel appeared to Mary to announce that she was pregnant with the Christ child, he exhorted her to not be afraid.

*Luke 1:30 And the angel said unto her, **Fear not**, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God.*

Three: When Joseph was troubled by Mary's announcement that she was with child and contemplated what he should do, an angel appeared in a dream and encouraged him not to be afraid.

*Matthew 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, **fear not** to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*

Four: An angel appeared to the shepherds illuminated with the glory of the Lord, and the angel commanded them not to be afraid.

*Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, **Fear not**: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

Five: After the angel appeared to Zechariah and his tongue loosed from its bondage, he announced a new possibility—service to God without phobias.

*Luke 1:74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him **without fear** (aphobos),*

It is the will of God that Christians serve Him and approach Him without fear, without guilt, and without shame.

Zechariah had comfort because the angel's presence was the result of answered prayer . . . for a son . . . a son that would be a blessing to the Hebrew people . . . a forerunner for the Messiah.

The angel relieved Mary of fear by announcing to her that she had found favor with God and would give birth to the promised Savior, "Jesus."

Joseph was relieved of fear because Mary's pregnancy was divine, and the Son born to her would save God's people from their sins.

The Shepherds overcame fear by recognizing that the promised Savior, the son of David, was born and living among them in Bethlehem.

Moreover, the whole Christmas story ought to motivate and empower believers to serve God without being tied up in the knots of guilt, shame, and fear of punishment.

Because Christ was born to save His people from their sins, all His people should live boldly and fearlessly, “for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

But, to those in darkness inspired by myths of elves and dancing reindeer comes “sudden destruction . . . as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

And “When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him,” and rightly so! (Matthew 2:3)

No angel appeared to Herod or pronounced a “fear not” to Him. While the fears of believers are not always justified; the fears of the “troubled” souls in apostate Jerusalem were understandable. They true King arrived in history and declared war against the citadels of unbelieving man. Herod and the citizens of Jerusalem have now met their eternal fate . . . a fate from which they “shall not escape.”

But, it is not too late for you.

God’s Christmas message to unbelievers is “fear much,” repent, and confess Him as your King and Savior; but,

God’s Christmas message to believers is “fear not!”

8. THE VIRGIN BIRTH

SEVEN REASONS THE VIRGIN BIRTH WAS NECESSARY

According to Redbook Magazine 56 percent of U.S. seminary students reject the idea of the virgin birth.

According to the Sunday Telegraph in London, England, 25 percent of the clergy do not believe in the virgin birth.

One New Hampshire vicar declared, “There was nothing special about his birth or childhood—it was his adult life that was extraordinary” (Highbeam Research).

According to the Harrison Poll (1993), 93 percent of professing Christians believe in the virgin birth, but only 27 percent of non-Christians believe the Biblical account.

Among college students, only 60 percent believe in the virgin birth. It appears the more education one receives, the lower the percentage of those who believe. Of those polled, 86 percent of republican accept the traditional view compared to 73 percent of democrats.

Parthenogenesis

The Greek word for “virgin” is *parthenos* (parqe,noj). The word “genesis” means beginning. Therefore, in theology *parthenogenesis* refers to the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Sumerian Civilization, we find a mythological carving on a wall about King Tukulti II who was created by the gods in the womb of his mother. The Babylonians believed that Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14) was conceived by Semiramis by a sunbeam from the Sun (Baalism to the Jews).

In India, Hinduism claims that after Vishnu was reincarnated in the form of a fish, tortoise, boar, and lion, that Vishnu descended into the womb of Devaki to whom Krishna was born. There is even a legend that Alexander the Great was born of virgin by the power of Zeus through a snake. The Romans believed that Zeus impregnated Semele without physical contact and that she conceived Dionysus, lord of the earth.

Modern science has observed parthenogenesis in aphids and social insects, honeybees, and ants. An unfertilized egg will give rise to the male drones and the fertilized eggs to the female workers

and queens. Charles Bonnet was the first to observe the phenomenon. In 1900, Jacques Loeb achieved the first case of artificial parthenogenesis when he pricked unfertilized frog eggs with a needle and observed that in some cases normal embryonic development followed. In 1936, Gregory Pincus induced parthenogenesis in rabbits by changing the temperature of the ovum and using chemical agents to facilitate the process.

But, parthenogenesis is completely impossible with the human race. There is no known agent or process apart from conjugal fertilization that can produce human babies. This fact alone should cause one to at least question the virgin birth of Christ. To believe in the virgin birth without facts is fideism; i.e., the willingness to believe anything without evidence.

Why should a person believe in the virgin birth of Christ?

Mary and the Virgin Birth

Let us clarify what we mean by the virgin birth. By virgin birth, Evangelical Christians do not infer a “miraculous birth.” His birth was not miraculous, but natural. Christ was born like any child would be born.

By virgin birth, we do not suggest an “unusual conception” or “miraculous” conception in the tradition of Sarah or Elizabeth who were past the age of childbearing. Mary’s conception was not “miraculous” in that tradition because Mary appeared to have arrived at a child-bearing age.

By virgin birth, we do not mean an “immaculate conception” as the Catholic Church teaches. The Catholic doctrine of Immaculate Conception asserts that Mary was herself conceived and born without original sin. Like the rest of humanity, she had a human father. She also needed a Savior (Luke 1:47).

By virgin birth, we mean that her pregnancy did not originate through a sexual union with a man, but originated supernaturally through the work of God’s Spirit.

By virgin birth, we mean that His conception was miraculous in that Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit and not by a man.

REASONS FOR THE VIRGIN BIRTH

1. The Textual Reason

The text says, “When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.” (Mt. 1:18). The Biblical writers were not fideists. They understood the “birds and the bees” and how babies were born out of wedlock. They also

understood the skepticism that sprouted surrounding the birth of Christ. Notice that Matthew does not indulge that skepticism, but simply tells the facts surrounding the birth of Christ. Mary was pregnant before they consummated their union. Joseph knew Mary was pregnant, and he knew he was not the father.

Joseph was the first skeptic! Joseph was caught in a tension between the facts (She was pregnant) and Mary's testimony and character (She appeared to be a pure woman). However, Joseph was no man's fool. Unable to reconcile the issue, he decided to divorce her. And, he would have divorced her except God intervened through revelation to reconcile the issue. In Joseph's dream, God revealed that Mary was indeed pregnant through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Mary's faithfulness to Joseph was no longer in dispute, and the reason for her pregnancy was acceptable to him. There is no evidence that God spoke to Joseph before this event or after this event, but the dream was powerful enough to overcome his incredulity.

Note the character of Matthew as an historian. His documentary on the life of Christ is first rate as a biography. He was a Jew. He was aware of the commandment, "You shall not lie." He was a follower of Christ who taught the Golden Rule and held his disciples to the high standards of the Torah (Mt. 5:17). He heard Jesus denounce the Pharisees for lying (Jn. 8:44). Christ taught publicly and opened himself up to his critics requesting them to expose a lie in his own teaching (Jn. 8:46). Even Jesus' enemies called him, "true" (Mk. 12:14). To insert a deliberate lie into the record of Christ's birth would be to deny his Jewish and Christian training. For Mathew to lie does not seem plausible.

2. The Prophetic Reason

The text informs us that God did not leave Joseph wrestling with his own subjective experiences but directed Joseph to look to prophecy through the medium of a dream (Mt. 1:22, 23):

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

God refers Joseph to Isaiah's prophecy that He would give as sign to the House of Israel. The sign of his visitation would be that a virgin would give birth to a son. From Genesis to Malachi, the Scriptures predicted the coming of a Redeemer that would defeat man's enemies and usher in the kingdom of God. This redeemer would come through the seed of a woman (Genesis 3:15). He would be one of Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12, 15, 17, 20, 22). He would be an Israelite (Num. 24:17). He would be a descendant of David (Is. 9:1-6). He would be born in

Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). And, He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). A virgin birth was necessary because Biblical prophecy demands fulfillment.

3. The Linguistic Reason

The text uses the Greek word *parthenos* to describe Mary. The term *parthenos* refers to a young unmarried woman who has not had a conjugal relationship with a man. Philip the evangelist had virgin daughters (Acts 21:9). Virgins are addressed in Paul's treatise of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:25, 28, 34. The church is called to be pure "virgin" (*parthenos*) espoused to Christ. To think that the term *parthenos* means anything else other than a pure, unmarried woman is untenable.

Skeptics, however, advance the belief that the term *parthenos* refers to an "unmarried" woman rather than to a classic "maiden." In the Hebrew culture, two words were used to describe unmarried women. The first is called a *bethullah* (hl'šWtB.) and the second is called an *almah* (hm'l.[:]). Rebecca was called both a *bethullah* (Gen. 24:16) and an *almah* (Gen. 24:43). The difference between the two words, however, is interesting. The term *bethullah* could refer to an unmarried virgin or an unmarried widow (Joel 1:8). The term *almah* refers ONLY to a young, unmarried maiden. The term "virgin" (English) or "*parthenos*" (Greek) in the Isaiah 7:14 comes from the Hebrew word "*almah*" leaving us no doubt that Isaiah was predicting the birth of son through a classic maiden. In the Septuagint, the Hebrew translators translated the Hebrew term "virgin" (*almah*) as *parthenos*.

That Isaiah's promise involved his wife is true . . . but, we ought to remember the fulfillment is always greater than the promise. While the birth of Isaiah's son became a sign to the king, the Spirit intended Isaiah's promise to find a supernatural fulfillment in the miracle of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ?

4. The Typological Reason

The Scripture teaches that men are born "sinners" (Ps. 58:3; Is. 53:6; Rom. 3:10-19; 23); i.e., with a rebellious, selfish nature. Children are not born good or neutral but with an inclination towards evil. Humanity inherits this "bent towards sin" from Adam (Rom. 5:12ff). The sin nature is passed on to children from their father, and since all children have human fathers, all children are born sinners. If Christ had had human a father, he would have had a sin nature. Since he was born of a virgin by the Agency of the Holy Spirit, He escaped the curse of sin. For this reason, Jesus is called the righteous one (1 John 2:1; Heb. 4:15) with whom God is well pleased (Mt. 3:17).

5. The Theological Reason

If Christ was not born of a virgin, then all of the Old Testament (OT) types and shadows are meaningless. For instance, all of the OT sacrifices had to be “without blemish,” perfect in physical appearance. The Passover lamb had to be inspected for four days to test its qualifications to be a sacrificial lamb. The red heifer had to be pure red. All the bowls and vessels of the tabernacle had to be clean. Bread offered to the Lord had to be without leaven. All these types pointed to the Perfect One Who would be born without sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 John 3:5) and Who did no sin (1 Pet. 2:22) and Who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Only a sinless person, born of a virgin, could fulfill all the OT types, which symbolized the perfection of Messiah.

6. The Historical Reason

Not only did the Messiah have to be free from Adam’s curse, he had to be free from the curse upon Jeconiah. Jeconiah is called “Cononiah” or “Coniah.” The Messiah came through Abraham to David and from David to the Messiah—real people in history. God promised that one of David’s descendants would sit upon the throne of David (2 Samuel 7:1ff; Is. 9:6; 11:1). The term “son of David” was a messianic term and everyone in Biblical times understood the title to refer to the messiah king that was to come. One of David’s descendants, an heir to the throne, was so evil and so wicked the Lord pronounced a curse on his descendants. This curse is known as Jeconiah’s curse. This meant that none of Coniah’s physical sons or descendants could inherit the right to be a king and to sit in David’s seat of power. If Jesus were a descendant of Coniah, He would indeed be related to David, but He would also be under the curse, and, therefore, would be disqualified from sitting on David’s throne.

Jeremiah 22:30 Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

Matthew 1:11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

Though this curse appears to frustrate the promises of God regarding the Messiah, the conflict is resolved in the virgin birth of Christ. Because Jesus was born of Mary, the great granddaughter of Nathan, the son of David, Jesus was genetically linked to David and thus to Abraham. Because Joseph was not his biological father, Jesus was free from the curse upon Jeconiah. Because Joseph adopted Jesus as his son, Jesus inherited the right to sit upon David’s throne by virtue of the fact that Joseph was a descendant of David. When the angel appeared to Mary, the angel announced that she would have a child Who would sit upon the throne of David. In Acts 2, Peter announces this prophecy to be fulfilled by virtue of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension into heaven (Acts 2:30-32). If Jesus had not been born of the virgin Mary, there would be no resolution to Jeconiah’s curse.

7. The redemptive reason

The name “Jesus” comes from the Hebrew word for “Joshua”, which means “Jehovah our Savior.” If Jesus was NOT totally free from sin, He would not qualify to be a Savior. If He had sin in Him, He would have to pay for His own sin. Because He was sinless, He could be our Savior and bear our sins as the Lamb of God.

I heard a story about a preacher in Philadelphia. At the close of the service a stranger came up to D.M. Stearns arguing, “I don’t like the way you spoke about the cross. I think that instead of emphasizing the death of Christ, it would be far better to preach Jesus, the teacher and example.” Stearns replied, “If I presented Christ in that way, would you be willing to follow Him?” “I certainly would,” said the stranger without hesitation. “All right then,” said the preacher, “let’s take the first step. He did no sin. Can you claim that for yourself?” The man looked confused and somewhat surprised. “Why, no,” he said. “I acknowledge that I do sin.” Stearns replied, “Then your greatest need is to have a Savior, not an example!” (Source unknown).

In summary, the virgin birth of Christ is foundational to the Christian faith. Because Jesus is free from sin, He is qualified to be the Savior. The great hope of Christmas is that God so loved the world He sent the Holy One, born of a virgin, to save His people from their sins. That hope is more than pie in the sky when you die. It is thoroughly grounded in history and the virgin birth of Christ. Don’t depend on polls to determine your faith, believe the Scriptures and you will be saved from your sins—for He came to save His people from their sins.

9. HE SHALL BE GREAT

“He shall be great” – Luke 1:32

You have to marvel at the efficiency of Scripture because it contains so much wealth in such a tiny package.

Without a trumpet blast, or a Hollywood light parade, the holy text simply says, “He shall be great.”

Never was there a text that says so much in so little. The Holy Spirit gave Mary a gift and left her, and us, to unwrap the package to behold the greatness of Jesus.

Let us consider the greatness of our precious Lord.

First, consider the greatness of this wonderful announcement. God’s people had not seen or heard from an angel in over 400 years. Four hundred years of silence was broken. And, now, within six months, God spoke to two people, Zechariah the priest, and Mary, the mother to be. Moreover, we even know the name of the angel who delivered this message, Gabriel. His message is not one of judgment, but one of mercy and hope. A baby is going to be born and He is going to be great . . . Oh, how He is going to be great!

Second, consider the greatness of His name. He shall be called “Jesus,” (*Iesous* in Greek and *Yeshua* in Hebrew). His name means “savior” or the “Lord saves.”

There is a shortage of saviors. Men look for savior presidents and political leaders who can save the economy and make their nation great again. But, “It’s not the economy . . .” It is sin! The great problem among men is not a shortage of commodities, but broken, flawed, cracked, morally bankrupt megalomaniacs running the world serving their own agenda.

Moreover, His name is sweet—sweet to hear, sweet to say, sweet to sing. It is the sweetest name I know!

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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Third, consider the greatness of His mission. His mission is wrapped up in His name: He “shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

We can't even save one person from one sin much less save all of God's people from all of their sins. We can't even save ourselves from one sin for whoever breaks one commandment breaks the whole law. Here is One so great He can take away the sins of the world (John 1:29; 12:47) . . . and most importantly, He can save me from my sins.

Fourth, consider the greatness of His person: "He shall be called the Son of the Most High."

Who can grasp the difference between being a son of an earthly king and the Son of God? The latter is superior to the former as the Sun is superior to the moon; as gold is superior to iron; as a rose is superior to a creeping thistle.

He is called the Son of the "Most High." We consider men great if they are the son of a rich man. But, we know in our heart of hearts they were just raw, sinful people like us. But, Jesus? He is the Son of the Most High—holy, righteous, loving, and just.

"Most High" is a glorious title for the Creator-God. There are high people in high places in government, but Jesus is the highest of the Highest. He is from the Source of all things. Jesus is not an angel from God or a messenger from God or a man sent from God. He is the Son of God, one in substance with God, the Second Person of the Holy Triune Spirit, God incarnate indivisibly united with the Father, the Logos made flesh in whom all the fullness of Deity dwells (John 1:1-18).

Fifth, consider the greatness of His position: ". . . and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." When a president elect selects his cabinet members, the nation looks on with great interest in who is going to be appointed to these important offices. Most of us will never be appointed to anything, much less a cabinet position.

Mary received the announcement that her son would be great because He will sit on the throne of his father David; that is, he would be the King of Israel to rule and bless the people of God. Imagine, the King of God's people!

It gets better! Mary learned that her son would sit on the throne of David, but how should she possibly know that He would sit on God's throne at the right hand of God Almighty. In a mysterious way, the throne of David merged with the throne of God (Acts 2).

But, it is even more than this because Jesus became God's High Priest, God's Prophet, and God's King.

Isaiah 33:22 For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us.

Sixth, consider the greatness of the duration of His reign: “He shall rule over the House of Jacob forever.” Forever? Americans shake with excitement over the election of a new president. We have great hopes for them in the beginning; then, after four years, we are ready for a new leader. But, no so with Christ. He does not disappoint. He is so morally qualified, so wise, so caring, so loving, so beneficent, so just, so fair, so competent, so victorious, and so pleasing to the Father that He is appointed King for ever and ever.

Seventh, consider the greatness of His eternal kingdom: “His kingdom shall be no end.”

We have a saying, “All good things come to an end.” But, no so with this kingdom.

The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. Because He is immutable and eternal, His righteous kingdom is forever. His kingdom is forever because there is no foe, nor enemy, nor opponent who can dethrone Him. He is the Victor over all of man’s enemies. His righteousness prevails over sin. The power of His life outlasts the power of death. He throws Satan into the bottomless pit. All of the world’s great leaders perish, but our Lord lives! Their tombs crumble, but our Lord’s tomb is empty.

He reigns now, and it is our privilege to bow the knee and to acknowledge the greatness of the Son even though the minds of this world reject him.

10. WAS CHRIST BORN ON DECEMBER 25TH?

The birth of Christ is the most important event in history, as well as one of the most joyful holidays in Western tradition.

Some modern skeptics have questioned the date and proposed a September date for our Lord's birth.

Others suggest that Christmas emerged as a result of Christianizing Sol Invictus (birth of the unconquered Sun), a pagan festival. But, this is not true.

So, what is the argument for the birth of Christ being on or around December 25th.

Consider the following Biblical facts:

The Annunciation of Mary took place during the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (Luke 1:25-26). Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, the Christ was conceived in her womb. Immediately, upon hearing the news she visited Elizabeth in Judah and stayed with her three months (Luke 2:56). We believe this visitation took place in late March or early April.

Thus, John the Baptist was conceived six months earlier after his father, Zechariah had finished his service in the temple. If we can determine the time Zechariah ministered in the temple, we can determine the time he went home to be with his wife Elizabeth. My investigation revealed John was conceived in September / October circa 3 BC.

Consider the Eastern Orthodox tradition: The churches in the East inform us that John the Baptist was conceived in September and born around June the next year. If this be the case, then the Annunciation took place in March / April, three months before John was born. Based on a 40 week gestation period, these Eastern Orthodox Church propose the following dates:

John's conception – September 23rd, count six months and we have

Mary's Annunciation – March 25th, count three more months and we have,

John's birth – June 24th . Count nine months from March 25th and we have

The birth of Christ – December 25th, circa 2 BC

Since its ecclesiastical memorialization during the 4th century, both the East and West have celebrated the birth of the Savior on December 25th, and for good reasons.

The first argument for the December is because of tradition.

Saint John Chrysostom (347-407), Archbishop of Constantinople, had no doubt about the accuracy of December 25th being the birth date of our Lord.

He informs us that December 25th was chosen for the celebration of the Nativity because it was an ancient tradition in the West (Rome / Europe) and was received by the East in 376 AD. St. Chrysostom in a Christmas sermon (December 25th, 386) at Antioch delivered the following:

“it is not ten years since this day [Christmas Day on December 25] was clearly known to us, but it has been familiar from the beginning to those who dwell in the West.” “The Romans who have celebrated it for a long time, and from ancient tradition, and have transmitted the knowledge of it to us.” (Addis WE, Arnold T. A Catholic Dictionary: Containing Some Account of the Doctrine, Discipline, Rites, Ceremonies, Councils, and Religious Orders of the Catholic Church. Benziger Brothers, 1893. Original from Columbia University, Digitized Sep 15, 2009, p. 178)

We may take it as certain that the feast of Christ’s Nativity was kept in Rome on 25th of December . . . It was introduced by St. John Chrysostom into Constantinople and definitively adopted in 395 A.D. (Thurston. H. Transcribed by Rick McCarty. Christian Calendar. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III. Published 1908. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, November 1, 1908. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York).

Consider the hand of providence. Acceptance of the December 25th date was adopted by all the churches **without objection** in the early years of the church. Only in modern times have scholars claimed erudite insight into the birth of Christ namely among the Messianic community motivated to lead the church back into frayed Jewish traditions.

Antioch, the homeland of Chrysostom, adopted this day with eagerness and celebrated the birth of Christ on December 25th.

John of Nicaea confirmed to the Catholics of Armenia that James the brother of Christ did not censure this celebration or the date of it.

Cyril of Jerusalem, in writing to Pope Julius (337-352), caused Julius to search out the matter. In reading Josephus, he discovered that Zechariah saw the Angel and was mute, and that John was

conceived on 23rd of September, and that six months later the Theotokos¹ received her announcement about the Lord; and that she gave birth to the Christ on the 25th of December.

Basil the Great (330-379) delivered his laudatory discourse on the Nativity of Christ on the 25th of December.

Emperor Honorius of Rome (393-423) showed his brother Arcadius in Constantinople that the Roman Christians celebrated the nativity of Christ with much enthusiasm on the 25th of December.

Anastasius the Roman (491-518), Theophilus of Alexandria (385-412), and John of Jerusalem (356-417) celebrated the Lord's birth on December 25th.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in his book *On the Holy Trinity*, states Christ was born on December 25th.

Chrysostom went on to say,

“This festival hath been everywhere proclaimed so rapidly and hath grown to such a height. That which Gamaliel said concerning the preaching of the Apostles, I might confidently assert concerning this day; that because God the Word is of God, therefore it shall not only be overthrown, but every year be more widely observed and ore clearly known.” (Quoted by W.P. Ten Broeck)

The second argument for the December 25th date rests on the fact that those in the early church had access to the records / archives in Rome and expressed no doubt about the accuracy of the date.

The December 25th date was celebrated first by those in Rome by those who had access to Roman archives, and they celebrated December 25th as our Lord's birth day without any objection.

According to Luke 2:2 the birth of Jesus was at the time of “the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria” (3-2 BC). This taxing “census” or “enrollment” occurred precisely in keeping with Luke's chronology regarding the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ:

¹ Theotokos: In Greek tradition Christians refer to Mary as the “Mother of God.” The emphasis here is a bit too strong for Protestants, but it does highlight the fact that Jesus is more than a man—that He is God incarnate all Christians agree.

“Tertullian (Against Marcion 4.19) states that the enrollment at the time of the birth of Jesus was ‘taken in Judea by Sentius Saturninus,’ and we remember that for Tertullian, as for many other early Christian scholars (§ 489), the date of the nativity was 3/2 B.C. Josephus (Ant. 17.89) refers to the time when Herod the Great had opportunity to speak about his son, Antipater, to Varus, and says: ‘At this time there happened to be in Jerusalem Quintilius Varus, who had been sent to succeed Saturninus as governor of Syria.’” (The Enrollment of Quirinius)

The birth of Christ as being on December 25th goes as far back to the archives in Rome.

This argument rests on the presumption that mothers recall with great specificity when their children were born, and Mary is no exception! How could she forget anything? She must have told Luke, Paul, Peter, John, Matthew, and the other disciples every precise detail of her unique pregnancy, angelic visitation, and her delivery at Bethlehem. That Jesus was born on December 25th was accepted in the first century and without question.

Further, Dr. Luke received his details about the dates and circumstances of our Lord’s birth and the birth of John the Baptist from Mary. This information spread rapidly through the churches in the first century before it received ecclesiastical ordination in the 4th century. And when our Lord’s birth was memorialized on December 25th, it received immediate universal acceptance . . . because it conformed with what the churches around the Mediterranean had already asserted.

Theophilus (A.D. 115-181), Catholic bishop of Caesarea in Palestine:

“We ought to celebrate the birthday of Our Lord on what day soever the 25th of December shall happen.” (Magdeburgenses, Cent. 2. c. 6. Hospinian, De origine Festorum Chirstianorum.)

The third argument for the December 25th date rests on the premise that Zechariah was acting as Deputy High Priest on the Day of Atonement in September that year and that John was conceived between September 23rd and October 23rd.

Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, Ambrose, Theodoret, Dionysius the Areopagite, Venerable Bede, and Theophylact among others affirm the Zechariah was acting as high priest on the Yom Kippur that year.

This view calculates the conception of John in October 3 BC, and Mary being pregnant visited Elizabeth when Elizabeth was six month pregnant; that is sometime in late March or early April in 2 B.C. If this is the case, Mary would have given birth to Jesus around December 25, 2 BC.

The entire tradition of the church has acknowledged that Zechariah was the high priest in September.

The objection arises from some noting the text does not say Zechariah was the high priest, but only a priest (Luke 1:5). The answer is that it was common to call the high priest “the priest” as Leviticus 13:2 says of Aaron: “They must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons . . . “. The term “priest” and “high priest” were an interchangeable title. For other examples see Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:15.

It is also clear that Zechariah was ministering inside the Holy Place when the angel appeared beside the altar of incense (Hebrews 9:4). Further, the people were concerned (wondered or marveled with anxiety) because Zechariah delayed in coming out of the temple (Luke 1:21). Five minutes must have felt like five hours to the people.

Thus, it has been proposed that Zechariah could have “censed” in the Holy of Holies and as he returned into the Holy Place, the angel Gabriel met him which delayed his return to the people out of the Holy Place. That the people were anxious supports the view that Zechariah was performing sacred duties on the Day of Atonement that September. Jewish tradition informs us that prayers were shortened so as not to cause anxiety among the people.

Mishna, Yoma 5:1: “He did not make the prayer long so as to frighten Israel.”

So, when Zechariah did not return quickly, the people were naturally concerned that he was slain by the Lord; and, the fact that when he came out of the temple mute must have left an indelible impression on everyone, especially Zechariah, Elizabeth . . . and later Mary.

We also know the priesthood had become a political matter. Tension arose between the people and Rome. Sometimes, in order to keep peace with Rome, Herod killed a rebel high priest and appointed his own political priest who would favor Roman occupation. As scholars examined the lists of high priests during this period, we know they were elected, selected, and chosen by lot each year between 3 BC and 6 AD. A priest for a year couldn’t accumulate too much political power.

Moreover, there is a good argument that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist because he was the true high priest of Israel in contrast to Caiaphas (14 B.C. - 46 B.C.), who was the political choice for high priest by Rome.

However, this argument is not without objections. The objection arises out the fact that Zechariah was of the order of Abijah (a descendant of Eleazar, the son of Aaron) which served twice a year for one week at their appointed times; that is, the Luke reference could refer to his service earlier in the spring. It is true, that Zechariah did serve as a priest during these periods twice a year. Chrysostom informs us he was chosen by lot to serve on the Day of Atonement (a

fall festival) as a deputy high priest, and that one of his duties was to burn incense on this day. If this be true, then John was conceived sometime in late September or early October 3 BC.

Josef Heinrich Friedlieb argues it differently but comes to the same conclusion that Zechariah ministered during the Fall Festival saying the priestly course of Abias (the course of Saint Zacharias) was undoubtedly serving during the second week of the Jewish month of Tishri—the very week of the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of Tishri. In our calendar, the Day of Atonement would land anywhere from September 22 to October 8.

Some object to the December date of our Lord's birth because shepherds were not active in the field during the winter season. First, this just isn't true. Sheep need care all year round. Secondly, sheep were needed for the temple services, and it reasonable to think the priests secured many of their mandatory sheep offerings from Bethlehem, six miles away from Jerusalem . . . and during the winter season.

Some object to the December date because it was the rainy season in Israel. First, Bethlehem is not in Norway or Siberia. It is on the same latitude as northern Florida and Dallas, Texas. An average day in December will be 54 degrees—that is, perfect!

Finally, consider against that the Hand of Providence has given us December 25th as the day to celebrate our Lord's birth as a blessing to the whole world.

Acceptance of the December 25th date was adopted by all the churches **without objection** in the early years of the church.

This day has been a witness to Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and Africans that God-incarnate lived among us. December 25th is sweet incense blessing the whole world with hope, love, and charity. It is a triumphant witness to the love of God that sent his Son into the world to save sinners.

Moreover, it is a human perversity to think that this great event was the product of haphazard guess work and sloppy scholarship among early Christians. Only a proud, arrogant man interested in advancing his own reputation would challenge this date twenty-centuries removed from those who had access to the early records and their deposition in the Roman archives. What a shame for a pastor to discourage Christians from celebrating the Lord's birth on December 25th and to be the Grinch that stole Christmas.

While it is not necessary to know the exact day of our Lord's birth, December 25th is a reasonable time to celebrate the greatest event in history.

Let us remember our Lord's birth on December 25th as the day the God-man entered history to show us the Father, and to save us from our sins. Amen!

11. THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

Luke 2:21 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

It pleases God for His children to celebrate all the events of His Son on earth because the visitation of our Lord was the most important matter in human history.

That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself is not only the grand meaning of the incarnation, the story must be told again and again until the church is purified.

That the God-man was among us being fully God and fully man demands our thoughtful attention. Who cannot but pause and wonder that “The Word” became “flesh” and dwelt among us is the antidote to Adam’s indulgence at the Poisonous Tree?

Let us consider the significance of the circumcision of Christ.

Historically, Christians have celebrated the circumcision of Christ on January 6 as part of the Feast of the Theophany Lights.

January 6 was chosen because of its proximity to Christmas. Some believe it was a time when pagan Rome honored the winter solstice, a celebration of the sun as the god that gives light to support the world. Early Christians sought to redeem pagan days and to focus the world on the wonder of the Christ-the birth of the God-man. When pagan Rome moved the celebration of the winter solstice to December 25th, Christians responded in like kind. They celebrated the Sun of Righteousness arising in history on December 25th (Malachi 4:1-4), and the circumcision of Jesus on January 6.

This is not the whole the truth of the matter. That Jesus was born on or around December 25th was well accepted by the church so that when the eastern church memorialized the birth of Christ on December 25th in the 4th century, it was immediately accepted in the east and west.

The celebration of Christmas on December 25th is grounded on the premise that John the Baptist was conceived on or near September 25th, and born the following year on or near June 25th; that Mary being pregnant with Jesus met with her aunt Elizabeth sometime after March 25th or Early April while Elizabeth was six months pregnant.

This being the case, a December 25th date makes sense . . . and this happened to be the season for the Feast of Dedication, the 25th of Kislev — a memorial that lasted eight days celebrating the reconsecration of the temple following the victory of Judas Maccabees in 165 BC over the Hellenistic kings, in particular, Antiochus Epiphanes.

This being true, Jesus was circumcised eight days later on January first.

So, there is good reason to believe that Jesus was circumcised on January 1st eight days after His birth on December 25th or on the last day of the eight days of the Feast of Lights, the 25th of Kislev; that is, the celebration of the circumcision of Christ had very little to do with replacing pagan holidays. Christmas was formalized in the East under Chrysostom, circa 386 AD. Because a December date for the birth of Christ was undisputed by the Mediterranean Churches, the memorialization of the birth of Christ on the 25th of December was immediately accepted.

Furthermore, there is a good argument that Christ was born on or near the 25th of Kislev, the first day of the Feast of Lights or Feast of Dedication. It was during the Maccabean Feast the Good Shepherd revealed to his disputants that He was one in substance with the Father; that is, “he and the father are one;” that he was very God of God, God incarnate, the God-man (John 10:21-31).

And, it was on the last day of this feast, the Lord was circumcised. Thus, celebrating our Lord’s circumcision in early January is very appropriate.

The circumcision of Christ which occurred eight days after His birth confirms the humanity of our Lord.

It causes us to consider the seedless conception of the Savior from the Virgin Mary—a true and supreme miracle. Untainted by Adam’s transgression, one man among us, without sin, prepared to be the pure Lamb of God to save His people from their sins. The Feast of the Circumcision of Christ remains a perpetual rebuke to the Gnostics who shunned the material world, and embraced the spiritual world; who denied the humanity of Christ, and embraced only a “spiritual redeemer.”

The circumcision of Christ is proof that He was truly man in space and time.

As a man on a pilgrimage through time, He followed the prescription of circumcision given to Father Abraham. While Christ pre-existed in the presence of the Father as God of God, He was also the son of Mary, a true man, a Hebrew, a Son of the Covenant, a baby boy under the rites of circumcision. Here we have Christ assuming the nature of man and following the path of infancy to perfect manhood.

The circumcision of Christ is gospel in Luke.

It is good news that God was at work to save His people. Government cannot save us. God did not send an angel to redeem man. No animal was sufficient to supply the price of redemption. He sent His beloved Son, the Second Person of the Triune God to become an *anthropos*. Simeon could say on this day, “My eyes have seen thy Salvation.” Salvation was in a Theanthropic Person, not an event or angelic being or acts of the State.

The circumcision of Christ is the day He publicly received the precious name, “Jesus.”

On this day, Virgin Mary complied with the instructions by the angel in Matthew 1:21-22 to call him “Jesus”- the name pre-determined by the Father before the Christ was born—a name given to the child before Mary and Joseph lived together and consummated their marriage.

The name “Jesus” means “Savior” and enlightens us with brightness and glory of His mission.

The name “Jesus” is an English word for the Greek word *Iesous* which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Joshua,” or “*Yeshua*,” which means “Jehovah is Salvation.”

With prophetic grandeur, Isaiah calls the virgin’s child, “Immanuel” telegraphing to mankind that “God is with us.” (Isaiah 7:14).

In Zechariah’s prophecy (Luke 1:67-79), he uses terms like “visited us,” “accomplished redemption,” “horn of salvation,” “salvation from our enemies,” “mercy toward our fathers,” “rescued,” “Sunrise on high” “to shine,” “to guide,” and “the way of peace” to infuse megatons of meaning into the importance of the Sun of Righteousness appearing in history.

The circumcision of Christ announces the power of His name.

He is not only Sweet Jesus, He is Powerful Jesus!

He is the Savior—and, saving one man is no small task. Consider the bone-crushing power involved in washing away all the sins of His people at cross and His command for the dead “to rise.” Only a god has this kind of power.

Consider His political power. Born into history is the God-man, the true Israel, the King of the Nations, the Master and Benefactor and Lord of mankind.

Consider the moral power of our Lord. He was the innocent, sinless, flawless, perfect lamb in heart, mind, and soul with no sin in Him. Men wrestle with sin within and without. The very best of among us achieve perfect responses in despairing circumstances for a second or two, but our Lord lived out His life of perfection 24/7, 365 days a year, for 33 years. Even when squeezed at

the cross by the wrath of man and the wrath of God, only the fragrance of virtue trailed His sacrifice. That's power!

His circumcision signifies a pure state, an immutable state of absolute purity.

Circumcision was a sign of detachment from the carnal and devotion to the spiritual; a sign of forsaking the temporal and natural, to pursue the eternal and supernatural; a sign of rejection of the flesh and acceptance and empowerment by the Spirit; a sign of repudiation of sin and allegiance to God's law-order; and, a sign of being under the covenant (contract) in relationship to the LORD God of Israel.

What was a sign to all Israelites and anemically achieved among the saints was marvelously actualized and perfected in Christ! While the world and flesh became the crucial reference point to men, the God-man walked in perfect balance the tightrope between heaven and earth. He was spiritual, but not other-worldly; He was truly a man, but not a lewd and sensuous person. His circumcision was more than a sign of holiness, He was holiness personified in human life.

His circumcision denotes perfect holiness.

"Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy" (2:23).

Due to Israel's redemption in Egypt, God claimed rights over the firstborn. Every firstborn child was to be ceremonially dedicated to the Lord; that is, he was holy and separated to temple service. Later, this requirement was transposed upon the Tribe of Levi.

Christ is called God's Firstborn (Colossians 1:15-17)—a reference to His preeminence, not birth in time. Unlike Israelite males who were ceremonially "holy," the Son of Virgin Mary was holy in being. His seedless conception insured freedom from Adam's sin. He was not only untouched by Adam's sin; He is archetype of righteousness itself. For this reason, He received the appellation, "The LORD is our righteousness." Christ's holiness is set against the background of the Biblical testimony to the sinfulness of man. Job declared that the sons of Adam are "abominable and corrupt," as one who "drinks injustice like water" (Job 15:16). Thus, the writer of Hebrews declares our Lord was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26); that is, His circumcision declared the perfection of holiness in the God-man.

Think of it! There was one man among us Who was free of Adam's infection, and Who was totally, completely, wholeheartedly dedicated to the will of God. What a marvel, and what joy He must have brought to the Father during His earthly pilgrimage.

His circumcision was a statement of incision.

To Hebrews, circumcision meant that a man was under the Law of the LORD God; that is, circumcision was the sign that a man was under contract to obey the law of his King; that he was to be a servant of His Majesty. But, because of the weakness of man, fulfillment of the law was sporadic and at times in Israel's history decadent. But, not with our Lord. Law was etched on his heart. He was not just committed to the law, He was the Living Torah, the subjective expression of perfect righteousness.

With Christ's circumcision, the law was being fulfilled so that grace could reign.

When Christ was circumcised, the law was already incised in his heart; and where law ruled, grace reigned in juxtaposition to perfect law. The throne of the LORD God is one of justice and mercy (Isaiah 16:5). John could say that majesty coalesced in the Son because "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). In verse 16 of this chapter, John announces, "And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." The Greek script reads "grace anti grace;" meaning "wave upon wave of grace," and endless supply of grace to meet the needs of sinful man.

Paul said that our Lord was "the end (telos) of law" (Romans 10:4); that is, He fully, perfectly, fulfilled all the requirement of the law for righteousness in His life and death. He did for Israel what Israel could not do for itself. The blessings of the covenant were conditioned upon Israel's obedience. Unlike Israel who disobeyed God in their time of testing, Christ obeyed the law fully. He obeyed God's law on Israel's behalf. In his life, He was Israel's Representative that fulfilled Israel's covenant responsibilities to God (Romans 5:20). In His death, he removed the curse of covenant breaking by becoming a curse for them (Galatians 3:1-14).

Not only is Christ Israel's Representative and means of obeying God's law for them; He is God's Representative (Mediator), the means or locus of covenant blessings promised to Israel by God if they trust Him.

Mary was under command to offer two turtle doves for her purification in child birth. Little did she know that He was the Dove that would have His neck rung and his blood shed to wash away her sins at the cross. And, not only her sins, but the sins of all of God's people. He is our sin offering, trespass offering, peace offering, meal offering, and burnt offering all combined into one. For this reason, at his circumcision, Simeon could say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation . . . a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32).

Glory! Men are no longer under law for justification. Men are justified by grace through faith; that is, they are declared righteous because of their faith in the doing and dying of Christ.

Do not hear what is not being said. We are not saying Christians are antinomian or anarchists. There is all the difference in the world between accepting the law as the standard of righteousness and making it a means of your salvation; between one trusting his law-keeping as a means of salvation, and a trusting one keeping the law because it is the right thing to do. Though Christians are not justified by law keeping, they are sanctified by law; that is, they accept God law as part of His household rules which must be kept in the course of this life.

The text says, “His father and mother were amazed the things said about Him” at his circumcision (2:32), and one who understands the circumcision of Christ will be no less astonished.

“Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel” (2:24); that is, our destiny is determined by our reception or rejection to the One Who was circumcised on that day. Salvation is based upon our acceptance of His offer to represent you and I as the God-man before Heaven’s Tribunal.

12. THE INTRODUCTION OF JESUS

The Last Aaronic High Priest Introducing the Eternal High Priest

How appropriate that the greatest prophet in Israel, John the Baptist, introduce the greatest man in history, Christ the Lamb of God, to the world (Matthew 11:11; John 1:29). It takes a great man to introduce a great man.

Have you considered why our Lord Jesus Christ went to John to be baptized? Or, why God chose John instead of Herod or Annas or Caesar to introduce Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world?

Even John was perplexed by the appearance of Christ before him to undergo the ordinance saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?” (Matthew 3:14).

This article investigates the proposition that John was God’s High Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood and that Jesus needed to be baptized as a requisite for His high priestly ministry in the order of Melchizedek.

It took the greatest man, God's high priest, to introduce His great Son to the world.

Before Aaron and his sons could perform the duties of the Levitical priesthood “Moses had Aaron and his sons come near and **washed them with water**” (Leviticus 8:6). Thus, the baptism of Christ was a symbol of washing which was a requisite for Him to enter His priestly, kingly ministry to Israel.

Our Lord’s first official act was to enter the temple in Jerusalem and to cleanse the temple of graft occurring during the administrations of Annas (6-15 AD), the retired high priest, and Caiaphas (27-36 AD), the political appointee of Rome. Caiaphas and His father-in-law Annas maintained a banking, money-changing scheme during temple festivals to fleece God’s sheep for their own enrichment.

Caiaphas was not God’s appointed high priest. Rather, he was Rome’s choice; that is, the priesthood had been politicized . . . and like all political appointments, the ruling official had obligations to the government. Bribes and franchises soon followed turning the temple into a religious for-profit business. This is the reason why Christ drove the money-changers out of the temple shouting, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of merchandise!”

In contrast to the corruption of the political priesthood was the purity of John the Baptist, God's true, official, duly appointed and uniquely qualified High Priest to the nation.

Matthew 11:11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist . . .

It takes a holy man to introduce the holy Son to mankind.

Because people are sinners, they need a qualified advocate to mediate their concerns to the Most High God.

John was totally qualified to introduce Christ to the world because . . .

John was a man.

Only a man could represent the concerns of men to God; and, only a man could mediate the interests of God to mankind. Women were absolved from temple, sacerdotal duties. Because John was a male and not a woman, he was a potential candidate among men to have mediatorial privileges in the things Divine.

John was not only a man but a son of Abraham and a member of the 12 tribes of Israel.

John was not a "Jew" in the religious or political sense of the term, but he was a son of Abraham, the Father of the Hebrew nation, a member of the twelve tribes of Israel chosen to be a blessing to the whole world. While race does not commend a man to God, he was among the people to whom God revealed His law, His word, and through whom came the Savior.

John was not only a member of the twelve tribes of Israel, He was a Levite.

Levites were charged with duties connected to the Tabernacle which included its military force, its priesthood, its services, its judiciary, its lawyers, and its educators. The Levites had a sword carrying police unit, lawyers who studied the Torah, judges who decided criminal and civil matters, singers and composers who wrote hymns for tabernacle services, and priests who performed the rites of propitiation in the temple, and teachers who instructed the nation on the ways of God.

John was not only a Levite, he was a descendant of Aaron, Israel's first duly appointed High Priest (Leviticus 9).

John was the son of Zechariah, of the clan of Abijah, a descendant of Aaron. His mother Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron (Luke 1:5)—a tiny fact-filled titan truth.

John was not only a descendant of Aaron, his birth was announced by an angel; that is, he was the special, appointed son of Zechariah the priest.

It was during the offering of incense in the Holy Place that an angel suddenly appeared to Zechariah to announce that he was going to be the father of a very special child who would lead many to the Lord (Luke 1).

John was not only a man and the special son of Zechariah, he was a pure descendant of Aaron.

The facts surrounding John are intriguing. John was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, both descendants of Aaron. Because his parents were both of pure priestly stock, John was qualified to be an Aaronic priest and to serve in the temple.

John was not only a special Hebrew Levite with a pure priestly lineage back to Aaron, he was a pure Nazarite.

—a man that did not cut his hair, touch dead bodies, or drink wine. Thus, the Nazarite purity of John the Baptist uniquely qualified him to be a true and virtuous priest to God (Number 6:1-27; Luke 1:15).

John was not only a special descendant of Aaron and a pure Nazarite, but a priest-prophet that would minister in the spirit and power of Elijah, the head of the prophets (Luke 1:17).

Here was a man that knew the Word of God, His law, and had the discernment to speak God's will to the people.

Consider that John was not only a prophet-priest, but a Spirit-filled Hebrew, Levite, Nazarite, and Aaronic priest-prophet!

Scripture informs us that "he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15-17). Think of it! A special, Nazarite, prophet-priest filled with the Spirit **from the womb!** Who had ever heard of such a thing? John was the most spiritually qualified man in history to be a priest and to mediate the things of God to man.

But, there is more.

John was not only a special Nazarite, prophet-priest, but God's Spirit-filled high priest-prophet.

It is believed, by many scholars, that Zechariah was the appointed high priest that year and that the angel of the Lord appeared to him while he was performing his duties at the Feast of Tabernacles circa the fall of 3-2 B.C.

Since Zechariah performed the duties of the High Priest, this made John the son of a high priest qualified to serve as a high priest for Israel. And, since he was a spirit-filled priest, a son of Aaron, he was God's choice for high priest.

In contrast to Caiaphas, the corrupt Roman appointed priest, John the Baptist was the most pure, holy, qualified man in history to be a High Priest and to introduce God's beloved Son to the world (Luke 1:15-17; Leviticus 10:8, 9).

No wonder Jesus said, "truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist . . ." (Matthew 11:11).

God did not call the likes of a Caesar, or Cleopatra, or a Herod to introduce His Son to the world. He did not use such carnal, defiled people as a Winston Churchill, a Queen Elizabeth, or a Bill or Hillary Clinton to introduce the King of kings to mankind. Perish the thought!!

He called a special, uniquely qualified, Spirit-filled Nazarite High Priest-Prophet to perform a ceremonial baptismal washing and to introduce Christ as Israel's ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King.

It was necessary that God's last and greatest Aaronic High Priest be the one to introduce to the world His beloved Son, the King of Israel, the Lamb of God, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, the Gateway to God, the Resurrection and the Life, the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, God's eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, and the Sacrifice who would save His people from their sins at the cross, and enter into the Heavenly Temple to intercede for them at the right hand of God (Hebrews 5, 9-10).

It took a holy man to introduce the holy Son.

Oh, the mystery of such things.

13. AT THE FEET OF JESUS

Have you ever noticed all the wonderful things that happened at the feet of our Lord . . . and still happen when men bow the knee to Him?

At the feet of Jesus, the sick, lame, and blind found healing!

Matthew 15:30 "And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them."

At the feet of Jesus Jairus found life for his daughter

"And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,"

At His feet, a Phoenician woman from deliverance from demons for her daughter.

Mark 7:25-26 "For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter."

At His feet, a woman of the street found forgiveness from all her sins.

Luke 7:27 - 38, 47 "And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment . . . Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven;

At His feet, the wild, naked man living in the tomes of the Gedarenes with a 1000 demons found deliverance, sanity, and love.

Luke 8:35 "Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid."

At His feet, Martha found correction, and Mary found commendation.

Luke 10:39 "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word."

At His feet, Mary found acceptance and protection from the censorship of Judas.

John 11:2 "(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment . . . Then said Jesus (to Judas), Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this."

At his feet, women found angels and a message from God.

John 20:12 "And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

At His feet, the disciples found proof of claim that Jesus defeated death.

Luke 24:29-40 "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet."

Matthew 28:9 "And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him."

But, there is more!

At His feet, you find all principalities, powers, and jurisdictions are subject to His control.

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

Hebrews 2:8 "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."

At His feet, John found comfort, authority, and inspiration for ministry.

Revelation 1:17, 19 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last . . . Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

But, there is a somber side to this story.

At the feet of Jesus, the enemies of Christ will be crushed in judgment.

Revelation 1:15 "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters."

1 Corinthians 15:25 "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

Among the tombs the Demoniac (Legion) found demons and swine full of sores, corruption, and devils, but at the feet of Jesus he found peace and devils driven into the sea.

One day the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Won't you come, fall at His feet, and learn His Gospel?

14. THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF HIS GLORY

John 2:11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

We have here the first miracle of Christ, turning the water into wine, at the wedding in Cana.

Our text calls this the “first of his signs” and the unveiling of his glory.

What a privilege to have walked with Christ from the beginning. John wants us stand in awe as the disciples did when they saw the unveiling of the character of the infinite, mysterious Christ.

Therefore, we want to investigate how this event discloses the royal, golden, tender glories our Lord.

BEHOLD THE KING

The miracle of turning water into wine follows John’s introduction of Christ as “the King of Israel” (John 1:49). Everything in this story has the aroma of royalty and aristocracy.

Because this is Jesus’ first miracle, and a glorious one at that, this account dispels all the blasphemous myths from the apocrypha writings such as the Gospel of Thomas about Jesus playing incantation tricks on people as a boy.

BEHOLD THE POWER OF THE CREATOR

Turning water into wine requires a total physical, material, chemical transformation of one property into another – the powers of an alchemist. As God made the world *ex nihilo*, our Lord transformed ordinary water into superior wine. Only the Creator-God could perform such a work. The transformation of water into wine in the six pots reminds us of the six days of creation. John wants us to understand that Jesus is the Creator of heaven and earth, the King of Creation. He is God, and God walked among us in the Person of Christ (John 1:1, 14).

God among us! What a thought! It is million times more significant than a UFO sighting or alleged extraterrestrial encounters or a short glimpse of a ghost-mirage in a haunted house. Why get caught up with such mundane trivia when the mankind has been visited by the Creator of Heaven and Earth?

BEHOLD THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST

Before us is a simple, peasant wedding in the small village of Cana, a few miles north in the hillbilly country of Nazareth. We do not even know the name of the couple being married, but we know they were poor and that they ran out of wine at the feast – a shame for sure. Even though this peasant couple was poor, unknown, and insignificant, the King of the Nations was pleased to grace this celebration with His glorious presence – a display of His wondrous humility.

BEHOLD THE DIGNITY OF CHRIST

As He created heaven and earth, He also created the institution of marriage. Having made man male and female and having performed the honors at the first wedding in the Garden of Eden, His Royalty was pleased to attend this simple wedding giving it dignity. In so doing, our Lord placed his stamp of approval on the institution of marriage rescuing it from the mundane and profane. The presence of the King at this village celebration dignified everything that we associate with the mystery of becoming husband and wife.

BEHOLD THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

It is no shame to be poor, but it is nothing to be proud of either. How humiliating to run out of condiments at a wedding reception. When the wine vats were empty, the party was over. In order to relieve this couple of shame, and to enhance the joy of the celebration, our Lord had compassion on this couple supplying what they could not afford.

BEHOLD THE LOVE AND GRACE OF CHRIST

There is nothing in our story that informs us of the worthiness of this couple. They were not better than, smarter than, or more worthy than ordinary people in the region. Our Lord's production of wine for the feast was a pure act of grace and kindness. He loved them, not because they were lovable, but because He is the God of all love and grace.

BEHOLD THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

When the party ran out the precious commodity, Mary came to Jesus saying, "They have no wine." Jesus responded, "Woman, what have I to do with you?" A sterling moment, Jesus respectfully informed His mother that a change in their relation had come. No longer would the mother-son authority relationship be with effect. He was entering His ministry as the Redeemer of Mankind. As such, she could no longer use her motherly position to command Him. Rather, she would have to take her place as a creature before the Creator; as a sinner before her Savior; as servant before a Master; as a subject before her Lord and King.

Here Jesus takes command – command of His mother; command of the wedding crisis; command of nature; and, command of the attendants in charge of serving wine. With the authority of a monarch, He orders the vats to be filled with water. But, in so doing He did not dishonor His Mother or shame her. This was His way of informing her He was no longer a child, but a man on a mission.

BEHOLD THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRIST

Having filled the six pots with water, our Lord transformed H²O into red anthocyanins and flavanols to make people drool over. The attendants were so impressed with the quality of this blush red-beverage, they praised the bridegroom saying, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

This was no ordinary wine on the level of *Veramonte Reserva Merlot* you can buy in the grocery store, but the premium wine like *Romanee-Conti megentas* imported from the vineyards of France that sells for 11,000 Francs per bottle. Everything our Lord did was with excellence.

BEHOLD THE GENEROSITY OF CHRIST

Our Lord not only gives good gifts, He gives abundantly. It is not imperial-like for kings to be chintzy. Not only did the wedding party enjoy the best wine, at the end of the day there was enough wine left over for the couple to sell and to start off the beginning of their marriage with wealth. Six synagogue water pots holding between 20 and 30 gallons of wine, 100 to 150 gallons would be worth between 20 to 60 thousand dollars or more at today’s market value. What a wonderful wedding gift -- thanks to the generosity of this King!

BEHOLD THE SELFLESSNESS OF CHRIST

Of all the glories revealed in this text, this is the most remarkable to me. Only a few days before the miracle at Cana, our Lord was in the wilderness being tested by the Devil. During that ordeal, Jesus went without food for forty day and nights—the maximum fast a man can endure before starvation impairs bodily organs. The text simply says, “he hungered!” He would not use his omnipotent powers to turn stones into bread to meet His own needs, but He would use His power to satisfy the luxuries of others. What a man! What a king! What a God!

Oh, the wonderful, royal, tender glories revealed about our Lord at the Wedding of Cana!

(Note: In the next event in John 2, the cleansing of the temple, we see the wonderful virtues of our Lord’s holiness, righteousness, purity, justice, courage, and equity. What a Savior! Forget fictional heroes produced by Jewish Hollywood. There is nothing that compares with the glories

of Christ. At the Wedding of Cana, we see the tender graces of our Savior that we associate with womanhood (before the cancer of feminism); in the Cleansing of the Temple, John shows us the iron virtues masculinity we associate with manhood (before the propaganda of toxic masculinity and the promotion of pajama boys). All the virtues to which men aspire coalesce in perfect balance in our Lord Jesus Christ.)

15. THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRIST

Psalm 45

Before us is a psalmist bursting with joy over the beauty of Another, and we would do well to consider the excellence our Lord.

Psalm 45:1 For the director of music. To the tune of "Lilies." Of the Sons of Korah. A maskil. A wedding song. My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer. You are the most excellent of men and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever.

We must be careful about what we desire for we will become the sum total of all our desires—whether good or bad.

In Psalm 45, we have a heart “stirred” by a noble theme. Hearts are often stirred by fruits connected to the poisonous tree, the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. But, this heart is stirred by something virtuous connected to the tree of life.

The tune “lilies” speaks of the purity and loveliness of this psalm. Of all the lyrics ever written by the sons of men, this hymn is a lily among thorns.

The Hebrew word “stirred” (*rachash*) is in the emphatic positions. It means “to bubble over” or “to keep moving.” Like an artesian well, the author feels his heart is going to burst with life-giving joy. The word “noble” is the Hebrew word *tov*. It means “good” or “excellent.” Good things come out of a good heart. It is perplexing when good things come out of a cold heart. It is sad when bad things come out of a warm heart. How refreshing when good fruits appear on a good tree.

The occasion for this geyser of enthusiasm is a wedding between a prince, the most eligible bachelor in the land, and his beautiful, country bride. We love weddings and there is nothing that captures the interest of nation more than a royal wedding.

Who is this author whose swelling heart begs to pen the excellencies of the King? The answer to this most important question is in the final verse of the psalm:

Psalm 45:17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever

Who is this Author? It is none other than the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Prince? The Prince is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is delighted to showcase the splendor of this majestic King. Only the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son can sustain such a promise. It is His work to inspire men to remember the greatness of Another.

Who is the Bride? It is His church, the redeemed, those chosen to share his reign.

Bubbling up with lovely words, the author spills over to pen this wedding hymn—and a geyser it is!

Psalm 45:2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee forever.

Consider his statement, **“You are fairer (brighter, more attractive) than the children of men.”**

It’s as if the King suddenly appeared before the Author. He utters a fact, a compliment, true and certain. We cannot count all the virtues of the Savior, but here are a few ways the Lord Jesus Christ is superior to other religious leaders and common men:

- He is fairer than other men in His origin whose goings forth are from everlasting.
- He is fairer in conception whose mother was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- He is fairer than other men in His nativity.
- He is fairer than other men in His nature -- He is the God-man.
- He is fairer than other men in His childhood (Luke 2:52)
- He is fairer than other men in His manhood.
- He is fairer than other men in His character -- He is holy and true.
- He is fairer than other men in His calling.
- He is fairer than other men in His works -- He died for the sins of men.
- He is fairer than other men in His teaching.
- He is fairer than other men in His response to evil.

- He is fairer than other men in His transfiguration.
- He is fairer than other men in His righteousness.
- He is fairer than other men in His devotion to the Father.
- He is fairer than other men in His suffering and passion.
- He is fairer than other men in His death.
- He is fairer than other men in His accomplishments.
- He is fairer than other men in His resurrection.
- He is fairer than other men in His reward and exaltation.
- He is fairer than other men in His reign and kingdom ministry.

Only as we focus on Christ can our heart be filled with good things. It is too easy to focus on our problems, our faults, our sins, and our failures. It is too easy to focus on the problems of our spouse, or boss, or co-workers, or political leaders. Let us do what the author of Hebrews exhorted us to do and “fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and Finisher of our faith and “consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” Then and only then will our hearts become an artesian well of spiritual life (Philippians 4:7-8).

Grace is poured into His lips.

By words, brides are won and wars are fought. The words of men seem to have no end and they are, more often than naught, fruits of the Poisonous Tree. But, the lips of Christ are anointed with grace. One word from his lips can raise the dead. “Rise” or “Come forth” or “Neither do I condemn thee,” or “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven” are words of life.

Our Lord never cursed, never swore, and never used profanity. But, He did curse a fig tree because a nation rejected the prophetic Word about Him.

- He never lied or embellished the truth.
- He never swore or used profanity.
- He never used a mince word.
- He never complained.

- He never bragged or boasted; He never uttered words of self-pity.
- He never answered with a threat.
- He never condemned a man that was just; or acquitted a man that was unjust.
- He never spoke when He should have been silent; and was never silent when He should have spoken.
- He never said more than needed to be said, or less than a man needed to hear.
- His words contained no poison or venom or bitterness or bait or hooks.
- He never gave a sales speech.
- He never rambled or continued talking after nothing else needed to be said.
- He never asked a question of which He did not know the answer.
- He never promised more than He could deliver, yet every fulfillment of a pledge was greater than His promise.
- His speech, though gracious, was never sugar-coated or sickly sweet.
- He never gave a man a tongue-lashing . . . or an insincere compliment.
- He never apologized or admitted error or a mistake or confessed a sin. In most men this would be evidence of arrogance and pride, but with Jesus it was because “He knew no sin,” and “did no sin,” and “had no sin.”

He knew all things but revealed the secrets of none; He knew the sins of all but slandered no man.

His praise of others was genuine and sincere; and, his condemnation of men was less than they deserved. He said of the Centurion, I have not found so great a faith in Israel,” and said of the Jews, “You are of your father, the Devil.”

He infused hope into the depressed; strength into the weary; health into the sick; life into the dead. He lifted Peter out of failure; Martha and Mary out of depression; Nicodemus out of self-delusion; and, the thief on the cross out of despair when He said, “Today, you shall be with me in Paradise.” He could cheer the hopeless and strike fear into the proud and arrogant.

The officers sent to accuse and arrest Jesus blurted out, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46).

His words were full of life and healing and hope and truth and grace. They were like myrrh on the lips, rain after a drought, and dew upon lilies.

A man of excellence, He is the Balm of Gilead (Jeremiah 8:22).

Therefore, God has blessed thee.

16. MEANING OF THE TITLE, “SON OF GOD”

The title *Son of God* is used 28 times in the Gospels, 10 times in John, 18 times in Acts through Revelation— a total of 46 times in the New Testament.

The title is uniquely used in John to define a special relationship of Christ to His Heavenly Father.

The word *Pater* is used by Jesus of the Father in Matthew 23 times and Mark 4 times, but He speaks of God as His Father 106 times in the Gospel of John. He uses the term “my Father” 24 times in the 4th Gospel. In the Synoptics, it is used in the latter half of His ministry. John writes his gospel so that men might know that Jesus is the Christ, but more than that: He is the Son of God (John 20:31) (Ladd, 1974, p. 247ff).

The title “*Son*” implies deity. John declares in his prologue that *Logos is Theos* and references His incarnation in John 1:14: “*They beheld His glory, the glory of the only Son of God.*”

The phrase, *monogenes para patros*, according to the best text is best translated “the only begotten from the Father.” Robertson says the “only theos” in the flesh has declared “theos” (John 1:14; 5:27; 9:38) (Robertson, 1932),

The title “*Son*” implies that Jesus is the unique Son of God. The translation “only begotten” in John 1:18 comes from *genos* meaning “kind” or “sort.” John does not employ the term *gennaō* which means “to beget” or “to be born” (John 1:18).

Further, John 1:18 is not accurately translated in the KJV. The correct reading using the witness of P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵ is *monogenes theos (God only begotten) or the only begotten God or the only manifested God.*

The idea behind *genos* is that Jesus is of “one class” or “one sort” or “one kind” or “one and only.” He is unique in that He is one in like kind with the Father; i.e., of the same substance. It does not mean that he came into existence at some point in time. God the Son has always existed. He is without beginning or ending.

Luke discusses the widow’s only son and uses the term *monogenes* to impress upon us her plight. Her one and only natural son had just died (Luke 7:12).

While others may become “sons of God” through adoption (John 1:12, 13), Jesus is the unique Son being of the same substance of His Father—that substance being spirit (*pneuma*, John 4:24).

The author of Hebrews employs the phrase “impress of the substance of Him” (*charaktartas hupostaseos*) implying that Jesus is one in substance, or of the same foundation, and made up of the same “stuff” that God is made. But, it does **not** imply that He is one in personality with the Father.

The Son is the special Object of the Father’s love (John 5:20; 10:17). His words are the words of God (John 8:26, 28, 40). His knowledge of God is exclusive and authoritative (John 6:47; Matthew 11:27). His honor due is that equal to the Father (John 5:21ff). To hear Jesus, is to hear God; To see Jesus, is to see God; to believe in Jesus, is to believe in God and to disbelieve Jesus is to disbelieve God (John 12: 44-48). But, Jesus and the Father are maintained throughout Scripture as two distinct Beings made up of the same spirit substance.

As the Son, His mission is to impart life. He has life in Himself and He imparts eternal life to those who believe (John 5:21; 5:26; 3:35), the beginning of a relationship was in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18); He also came to execute judgment (John 5:22-23) and to redeem men (John 1:29; 10:18; 12:24).

17. JESUS, THE ICON OF GOD

Colossians 1:15 He is the image (icon) of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

In Colossians 1:15 our Lord is called the “image of the invisible God” or the “icon” of God.

He is the visible manifestation of the invisible God; the Knowable about the Unknowable; the seen Presence of the unseen Essence. In Christ we see the temporal, historical visitation of the Eternal Existent One.

He is called the “icon;” that is, He exists in the likeness and pattern of God. Being the Only Prototype of Deity, He is of the same substance as the Eternal God having the same attributes and qualities of the Almighty.

Men cannot see the invisible God, but in Christ’s appearance on earth, men saw Jesus; and in seeing Jesus, men saw the unseen Eternal Spirit in the corpus of Christ.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Thus, Paul informs us “in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead (theotatos) bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

He is NOT of deity or of God or half God or just sent by God, but very God of God.

He is not the fullness of God, but He is fully God. Being of the same substance of God, He shares His eternal transient and intransient attributes.

Hebrews says the Son is the “express image” or exact, precise, accurate, real manifestation of God to men. This can be said of no other man (Hebrews 1:1-3).

FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION

By “Firstborn” Paul is not saying that Jesus was the first being ever created. Jesus is uncreated; i.e., He has always existed. Being eternal His “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

As “firstborn,” Paul communicates the primacy and priority of the Son above all beings (See Exodus 4:22). In communicating to men, the Spirit condescends to man’s ability to grasp eternal truth. As the firstborn of a father had a special place in the family, Jesus possesses the position of the Firstborn in the eyes of the Father.

*Exodus 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my **firstborn**:*

The whole idea that we (mankind) are every much a god as Jesus is a god is utter blasphemy—so close to the fruit of the poisonous tree you can hear the snake hissing.

HEAD OF THE CHURCH (Colossians 1:17-18)

In calling Jesus the Head of the Church, Paul is communicating His importance; that is, He is “is supreme, premier, above, exceptional, choice, premium, and the One in Absolute Authority over His people.

In the natural order, every command comes from the head. The body is totally dependent on its head. The head must be honored and obeyed, and it is the face that men promote.

Christ is the Head of the Church, not the IRS; not the government; not a civil ruler; not a pope; not elders or deacons; not a pastor; not a man.

The Colossian Church was rebuked for “not holding the head” by giving primacy to man-made decrees (Colossians 2:19-20).

Furthermore, He is not only the Head of the Church, He is Head over “all rule and authority” (Colossians 2:10) inferring that all men and all of man’s institutions are required to organize themselves around His authority and His law-order. As He is the Head of the Church, he is the Prince of the Rulers of the Nations (Revelation 1:5). Churchmen and government men are to arrange their duties under the authority of our Lord.

What a terrible thing it must be to dishonor the Head by abusing the name of Christ through neglect or blasphemy or applying to be an IRS organization. What a grievous sin it is for churchmen to surrender their churches to the IRS to legally replace Christ and to install the IRS as “Head of the church” making it a non-prophet, non-profitable organization (UPDATE ON CHURCHES AND RELIGION, Bronner v. Commissioner, 72 T.C. 368 (1979)).

In conclusion, Jesus has many names and titles. Not all are mentioned here. Each name and title reveals the station, character, and attributes of the Savior. To know His name is to know Him.

18. THE SEVEN DOWNWARD STEPS OF CHRIST

The Great Divestiture of our Lord

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.

Philippians 2:5-12

This is one of the loveliest passages in the Crown Jewels of Sacred Literature.

It is my favorite, and the one that has impacted my life more than any other. It challenges us to think like Christ, to be swallowed up with greatness of His humility, and to adopt His mindset. Yet, in a world grasping for health and wealth, few Christians seem to value the attitude of our Savior.

If I were to advertise a seminar on “How to Triple Your Money in the Stock Market this Year,” or “How to Develop Self-Esteem in your Child,” the auditorium would be packed. But, if I offered a seminary course on “How to Have the Attitude of Christ,” I’m not sure if anyone would show up. You see, we don’t esteem what God esteems. Men want to be like sports heroes, movie stars, and rich like John D. Rockefeller, but who wants to be like Christ? Nevertheless, let’s take a look at the attitude of our Lord Jesus.

Philippians 2:5-12 – Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Command: Our text begins with a command: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ” (2:5) The verb is a present imperative enjoining us to continually strive to cultivate the mind of Christ; that is, to think like Him. By “mind” the apostle is referring to the thinking of Christ and the lack of selfish ambition in his approach to life. The command to esteem (to place first) the concerns of (2:3) and to look (scope out) out for their interests is an imperative. It is not a great suggestion or good choice, but a command.

The mind of Christ is illustrated with the seven downward steps of His humiliation.

STEP ONE: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:6)

Selfless Attitude: “Being in the form of God is a direct statement regarding the deity of Christ. The word “being” is from the Greek verb (*huparchein*) which is not the common Greek word for “being.” This word describes the immutable essence of a man and that which cannot be changed. It describes that part of a man which, in any circumstances, remains the same. So Paul begins by saying that Jesus was essentially and unalterably Divine. It is not possible to think of Jesus just as a good teacher. Our text verifies our faith that Jesus was truly of the same substance as God. A good teacher, you can ignore. Being Divine, no man can afford to neglect.

What is it like to be a king with beautiful clothes, a golden crown, and universal respect? In eternity, in His Father’s Heavenly Palace, Jesus knew the glory, radiance, and honor of being the Creator. A rainbow of colors flashed before his angels. Choirs with a hundred thousand voices lent their talent to sing His praises. So bright was the flashing display of glory, seraphim covered their faces.

One day the Father commissioned His Son to surrender it all, to go to earth to be a man, and to save sinners from their sins. Lacking in the Son was any sense of greed, covetous, selfish ambition, jealousy, competition, or aspiration. He chose the finite over the infinite; the limitation of man rather than the limitlessness of God; the cloudy perspective of humanity over the clarity of the Divine perspective.

“Mind” (*phroneo*) refers to the basic orientation, bent, and thought patterns of one’s mind, rather than to the intellect itself. When announcing this in the present tense (continuous action, lifestyle) active voice (personal decision of the will) imperative mood (command not suggestion), Paul expects us to be humble like Christ.

Someone has said the hardest instrument to play in the orchestra is second fiddle. Pride is essentially competitive. Pride is not content with having honor. It must have more honor. Pride is not content with a piece of the pie, it must have a larger piece of the pie. There was no pride in Jesus.

“Bits & Pieces” illustrates the futility of greed in Leo Tolstoy’s story about a peasant farmer who was not satisfied with his portion in life. He wanted it all. One day he received a generous offer. For 1000 rubles, he could buy all the land he could walk around in a day. The only catch in the deal was that he had to be back at his starting point by sundown. Exhausting himself in a mad dash marathon to cover as much territory as possible, the farmer realized he was far from home. In the afternoon, he picked up his pace. Sweat rolled down his forehead. His heart raced. As the

sun began to sink below the horizon he came within sight of the finish line. Gasping for breath, his heart pounding, he called upon every bit of strength left in his body and staggered across the line just before the sun disappeared. He immediately collapsed, blood streaming from his mouth. In a few minutes he was dead. Afterwards, his servants dug a grave. It was not much over six feet long and three feet wide. (“How Much Land Does a Man Need?”)

STEP TWO: “He Emptied Himself”

Divestiture: From the verb “emptied himself,” theologians have developed “Kenosis Theories.” A question arises, “What did Christ give up when He came became man?” Some Christians have errantly concluded that He gave up his deity; that is, in becoming man, He gave up omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. Others have concluded He did not know that He was the Creator of the world; or that He did not realize who He was until His baptism. Such speculation boggles the mind.

My understanding of this passage is that in becoming man, Christ did not give up His deity as much as He gave up the glory and honor associated with deity. In becoming man, Christ did not give up His Divine attributes as much as He assumed the nature of man. This is called the *hypostatic union*. Christ was truly God and truly man. While on earth, our Lord did not cease to be God; but, He did live His life without displaying the robes of His Divine splendor. For a glimpse of what that which He divested Himself, consider the amazing events on the Mount of Transfiguration.

To grasp this, let’s look at an illustration from *Today in the Word*, April 3, 1992. A reception honoring musician Sir Robert Mayer on his 100th birthday, elderly British socialite Lady Diana Cooper fell into conversation with a friendly woman who seemed to know her well. Lady Diana’s failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest, until she peered more closely at the magnificent diamonds and realized she was talking to Queen Elizabeth! Overcome with embarrassment, Lady Diana curtsied and stammered, “Ma’am, oh, ma’am, I’m sorry ma’am. I didn’t recognize you without your crown!” “It was so much Sir Robert’s evening,” the queen replied, “that I decided to leave it behind.”

When Messiah came to earth, he left his crown (glory) behind. In becoming man, there was no regret and no envy of the Father by the Son.

STEP THREE: “Taking the form of a servant.”

Service: The text refers to the “form” of God and the “form” of a servant. Both are the same word (“*morphe*”). There are two Greek words for form, “*morphe*” and “*schema*.” Both must be translated “form” because there is no other English equivalent, but they do not mean the same

thing. *Morphe* describes a condition that never alters; *schema* describes a state which can change from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance. For instance, the *morphe* of any human being is humanity and this never changes; but his *schema* is that part of our humanity which is continually changing. A baby, a child, a boy, a youth, a man of middle age, an old man always has the *morphe* of humanity, but the outward *schema* changes all the time (Barclay). In Matthew 17: 2, Jesus was transfigured before them. This is the word *metamorphoo*, which was a revelation of the essence of Jesus and His unalterable Divine nature.

The text says our Lord took the form of a servant. One of the questions my grandparents use to ask me as a boy was, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” My answer included being a big football star. This question is asked every boy and I do not know of any that would include the answer: “I want to be a servant or a butler or a bellhop.” Even as Christians we want to do big things for God. We live in a success driven, corporate world where men are discontent with trivia. But, Jesus? He took the form of a servant.

Dr. Samuel Brengle of the Salvation Army loosely translated this verse, “He girdeth Himself with a towel.” Our Lord was not just any servant, He was the Servant of the Lord. Most of us serve our own desires, but Jesus could truly say, “Not my will, but Thy will be done.” Many of us serve, but we lack a servant attitude. Not so with Christ. The Savior not only served, He possessed servant attitudes. When He was tempted on the Mount of Temptation by Satan and urged to take leave of the fast commanded by the Father, He responded, “It is written.”

In Philip Keller’s marvelous book, “Sheep Dog,” Keller tells the story of a stray Australian sheep dog on his sheep ranch. Though Keller needed a dog for his ranch, the dog was a stray and avoided any contact with Keller. Keller decided to feed the dog and not compel him to submit. After several weeks, the dog put his nose in Keller’s hand and gave himself to the rancher. Keller trained the dog. Perfectly trained the dog would heel, sit, bark, and herd sheep. Often the dog would go into a thicket to chase out wayward sheep and come out with all kinds of thorns in his side and paws. He was the perfect dog. When it came time to sell the ranch, Keller put his dog to sleep. In explaining why he did this Keller explained that “the dog had given himself to me completely.” The ranch was sold and the dog’s work was finished. He was mine and the dog trusted me. It was my decision to end his life. End of the answer.

Likewise, Jesus was God’s Sheep Dog sent to earth to round up strays. Ordered to the cross, Jesus obeyed. He was the *doulos* of God who from first to last, from beginning to end was fully, wholly, totally dedicated to the will of God. What? One man on earth wholly committed to the will of God? What a delight!

STEP FOUR: “Was made in the likeness of men . . .”

Humanity: On that first Christmas morning, the Son of God lay in that manger with two eyes, little fingers, and ten toes. He was truly man subject to all the incumbencies that human beings face. This was a gigantic step down for the Son. For you and I to become an ant would not be half the step it took for the Son to become a man. Now he would experience all the irritations that men feel in life: fatigue, hunger, and pain. He understood heat, cold, sweat, and the tears of humanity. He learned how to crawl, to walk, to speak. He went through the growth stages of humanity: birth, growth, puberty, and adulthood.

STEP FIVE: “Being found in the fashion of man, he humbled himself.”

Humility: From the word “fashion,” we get the word *schematic*. It is the same word we use to describe the electrical circuit on the back of a washer or dryer. Like all men, Jesus walked, talked, ate, and slept. He was fully man. And, as a man, he endured all the limitations and difficulties of manhood. He knew what it was like to be hungry, tired, and weary. Yet, he did not shrink back from the task.

Not only was Christ a man, **he was a humble man!** Unlike the rest of us, Jesus had a choice of what kind of man to be.

He could have been born in Jerusalem, the City of Kings, but he was born in Bethlehem, the smallest of Jewish villages.

He could have been born into a family of wealth and privilege, but he was born a carpenter’s son.

He could have been born in a sterile hospital, but he was born in a stable.

He could have grown up in the city with all its fun and excitement, but he was raised in Nazareth, the “other side of the tracks” so to speak.

He could have been a doctor or lawyer or statesman, but he chose the occupation of a carpenter.

He could have owned many clothes, but at the cross soldiers gambled for his only garment.

He could have been born rich, but when giving an illustration he had to borrow a penny.

He could have entered Jerusalem on a white stallion, but he entered on the back of a donkey.

Consider the wonders of our Lord attitude in contrast to this question: If you could change ten things about your life, what would it be? Jesus had that choice, and He chose to be an ordinary, Hebrew boy raised in a poor Jewish home in the “hillbilly” country of Northern Galilee. Chew on this cud for a while.

STEP SIX: “He became obedient unto death . . .”

Obedience: The test of obedience is to surrender to God’s will when things do not go your way. It is not easy to obey the will of another, but it is even more difficult when death stares us in the face. Death has many indignities including sounds and smells and fears and pain. In surrendering himself to the Father’s will, he faced the most common plight of all men. There is no pride in death. All powers to save life are taken away. All control is stripped from a dying man. He has no choices. All rights are taken away. The final prayer for salvation from death is answered with a “No.” So aware of the Father’s resolute will, Jesus prayed with great drops of blood streaming from his forehead, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” The Father said, “No!” and Jesus accepted it. What a man! What a Son! What a Savior!

STEP SEVEN: “Even the death of the cross.”

Shame: The final humiliation of Christ was the kind of death he died. If I could choose my own death, it would be a hero’s death—an instantaneous death—something like the death of actor Bruce Willis in the movie “Armageddon” where the only hope for earth was for Commander Willis to blow up the asteroid with self-detonation. Instant death! No pain! Dying a hero! But, Jesus had none of these ambitions nor any of these fantasies. His was the most difficult death a man could die.

The cross is the Christian’s most sacred symbol. We often wear smooth, silver crosses around our necks. However, we need to remember that there was no status connected to crucifixion. The wooden cross had splinters and knots that scraped the skin. Accusation, charges, incrimination, damning verdicts, beatings, stripping of clothes, impalement, nakedness, agonizing pain, and public humiliation choked all optimism out the victim. Crucifixion is a death by tetanus poisoning where in the latter stages gripping thirst screams for attention while muscles contort and cramp causing a person to die of asphyxiation.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (2:10-12).

Humble in life and humbled by death, the Lord Jesus waited on the Father to raise Him from the dead. Today, that babe in Bethlehem is called “the Christ,” “the King,” “the Son,” “the Savior,” that at the name of Jesus every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

A long time ago, a good king ruled in Persia. Because he wanted to know how they lived, he dressed in the clothes of a working man and went to the homes of the poor. No one knew he was their ruler. On one occasion, he met a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the man’s

simple food. He spoke cheerfully and kindly to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, "I am your king!" The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate my simple food. You brought joy to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!

Likewise, Heaven's King has visited us on earth. Let's remember the seven downward steps of Jesus. Because He took steps downward, we can be assured of walking on the streets of gold in Heaven's celestial city. If we truly understand the glories of our eternal destiny, we can afford to give up our pride and prejudice, and take steps to be humble. Because of His humiliation, we have salvation. God was among us and has risen above us to save us, to guide us, and to deliver us.

Let me encourage you to develop more Christ-esteem and less self-esteem. We don't need to be thinking more about ourselves, we need to be thinking less about me, my, and I. Our problems are not related to poor self-esteem, they are busy eating away at our core because we have TOO MUCH SELF-ESTEEM! Let us think more of Christ . . . and less of self! The problems in the Christian community are due to one defect: We think too little of Christ!

The text informs us that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. "Jesus" is the sweetest name I know. Don't use His beautiful name and drag it down into the gutter. Stand up to those who abuse His name. Shame them with being so banal and blasphemous. Do you love Jesus? Then stand up for Him! Stand up to those proud, filthy men who dare take Heaven's sweetest name and dip it in a human cesspool. Show some teeth. Bark at the blasphemers . . . in nice Christian way, of course . . . or, maybe not.

All men will bow the knee to the Lord Christ -- some willingly in this life and others by force in the age to come. If you have not bowed the knee to Him and surrender to His authority, I encourage you to forsake your neglects of God and start a new life under His authority and His management. If you confess Him as your Lord and believe in your heart that He died for your sins and rose from the grave now, He will be your Savior for all eternity (Romans 10:9, 10).

19. THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST

Part I

Christ is greater than history, greater than the promises, greater than any of us fully know.

The great need among Christians is to think better of Christ.

Liberal scholars have suggested that Christ did not create the church, but the church created Christ; that after decades of nothingness this parochial Hebrew evolved into a giant mythological miracle-working rabbi. Lesser minds have suggested that Christ never existed at all, and that He was merely a mirage in the eyes of religious zealots. But, thoughtful men realize that history is really His Story.

“Christianity is not a doctrine, not truth as truth, but the knowledge of a Person; it is knowing the Lord Jesus. You cannot be educated into being a Christian.” –T. Austin-Sparks

When Paul addressed the Corinthians, he reminded them of the gospel He preached:

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time . . .

Paul’s gospel is the good news that Jesus’ history was certain and true.

The gospel instructs us that Christ lived in time and space; that He died on a real, wooden, splintery cross; that He was buried in a cold Jewish tomb, and that He literally, bodily, tangibly rose from the dead. A man alive after death? Who has ever heard of such a thing? This is indeed good news!

If Jesus historically triumphed over the grave, then He has solved man’s fundamental problem - death!

It is, therefore, good news that Christ lived, died, and rose again in history.

When the Old Testament (OT) closes, we are left with unfulfilled promises, unfulfilled expectations, and unexplained ceremonies.

The NT opens with the critical claim of “fulfillment” (*pleroo*).

- Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is **fulfilled**, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.
- Isaiah’s prophecy about the virgin was **fulfilled** (Isaiah 7:13-14).
- Matthew 2:15 Hosea’s prophecy is **fulfilled** (Hosea 14:1).
- Matthew 2:17 Jeremiah’s/Isaiah’s prophecy was **fulfilled** (Isaiah 53:3).
- Matthew 3:15 Righteousness is **fulfilled**.
- Matthew 4:14 Isaiah’s prophecy about Zebulun was **fulfilled** (Isaiah 7:1ff)
- Matthew 5:17 The law is **fulfilled**.
- Matthew 8:17 Isaiah’s prophecy about Christ was **fulfilled** (Isaiah 53)
- Matthew 12:18 Isaiah 42 was **fulfilled**.

The NT era was not an era of passing shadows, but of fulfillment. The following represents Christ as the embodiment of Old Testament expectations

CHRIST IS GOD’S NEW CREATION

Two major events dominate Old Testament (OT) themes: (a) the creation, and (b) the exodus.

The OT creation was God’s masterpiece, but on the day Adam sinned, all creation fell with him (Romans 5:11ff). The prophets planted hope by testifying to a day when God would renew the creation and restore Paradise. This hope was closely connected to the kingdom of God. Christ, however, is God’s *New Creation*. He has become Head not only of this earthly realm, the centerpiece of the heavenly realm. Furthermore, He regenerates men now, and calls them “sons of the kingdom.” His people are a new creation who are being prepared to share in the glories of a new heaven and a new earth (Colossians 1:15-16).

Figure 7: Christ the New Creation

OT CREATION

Spirit moved on the face of the waters

Genesis 1:2

The Spirit of God moved upon the waters

Adam was the head of creation

NT CREATION AND CHRIST

The Spirit shall overshadow you

Luke 1:35

The Spirit created the humanity of Christ

Christ is the head of the new creation
(Colossians 1:15-18)

CHRIST IS THE NEW ADAM

What Adam was to the human race (head), Christ is more to the chosen race (Head of the Church). While the first Adam failed, the Second Adam succeeded.

- The Spirit created Adam; the Holy Spirit created Jesus' humanity (Matthew 1:18).
- Adam was the first man in this earthly humanity; Christ is the first resurrected man in the new humanity (1 Corinthians 15:20).
- Adam was given authority over this creation; Christ is given authority over the new creation (Colossians 1:17, 18).
- Adam was given the dominion mandate to rule over the original creation ("Let man rule over . . ." Genesis 1:26) and Christ expanded the dominion mandate to "Go and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:18-20).
- Adam's disobedience was imputed to the human race; Christ's obedience was imputed to believers, the new race living among humanity (Romans 5:18).

CHRIST IS THE GREATER SON OF ABRAHAM

In Matthew's presentation of Christ, he begins with the genealogy of Joseph, Jesus' legal father. Matthew starts his record with Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, proceeds through the patriarchs, and then lists the kings in this royal record. But, the genealogy ends simply with Joseph, the husband of Mary, a common carpenter eking out a living in the hill country of Nazareth. Five women are mentioned and four of them are foreigners. It is a record of human failure and disappointment. Matthew wants us to know that after centuries of frustration and political miscarriage and aborted hopes, the glorious promises of God find their incredible fulfillment in the Son (the Savior).

Jesus is all that Abraham and the patriarch and the kings could never be. God promised to Abraham that he would be a blessing to the world. With the birth of Jesus, God's promise of blessing to the world arrived in history in and through His Son. At the end of Matthew, we have the risen Christ sending out his disciples to bless the entire world (28:19-20). He is Abraham's true son, true descendant, to be what Israel was supposed to be. Historical Israel failed, and was cursed. But, Jesus obeyed, and was blessed. In and through Him, the true Israel, the true Remnant, the hope of the prophets arrived in history. He is the means by which the Abrahamic promises are fulfilled.

Matthew's genealogy is a record of misfits and sinners dominated by personal character flaws and events they could not control. Judah and Tamar committed incest. David and Bathsheba committed adultery. Manasseh plunged into idolatry and immorality. Jeconiah was cursed because of his utter depravity. Joseph is simply introduced as the "husband of Mary." How could anyone great come from this line? While Jesus is linked to history, He is greater than history, greater than what His genealogy could produce. **God provided what history could not provide;** what DNA could not prepare; what blood lines could not produce—the Savior of the world.

CHRIST IS THE SON CALLED OUT OF EGYPT

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sent to Egypt "in order to preserve a numerous people" during a world-wide famine (Genesis 50:20). While in Egypt, another Pharaoh came to power who knew not Joseph who enslaved the people. Thus, Egypt became not only a type of refuge, but a symbol of bondage for God's people.

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" – Hosea 11:1

"Out of Egypt I called my son" - Matthew 2:15.

In Matthew's account, another "Joseph" is sent to Egypt to escape the madness of Herod, the baby killer, desperate to retain power. Thus, Jesus is the true Israel, the greater Joseph that goes to Egypt in order "to preserve a numerous people."

Like Israel was called out of Egypt to serve God's law on Mt. Sinai, Jesus is called out of Egypt with overtones of a new exodus, and the One who brings an end to oppression and slavery. Moses announced to Pharaoh that Israel was "God's firstborn" (Exodus 4:22)—his favored nation. Paul introduces Christ as God's Son, the Firstborn in this creation and the Firstborn in the new creation (Colossians 1:15-18). Christ is the new Israel, God's Son, God's Firstborn, and the One who leads a new exodus out of the chains and slavery of his people's sins (Matthew 1:21).

CHRIST IS THE COMFORTING DELIVERER

*“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she refused to be comforted, because they were no more”
(Matthew 2:18).*

Matthew establishes a link between Herod’s infanticide and Jeremiah’s pathos regarding Israel’s deportation to Babylon.

As Israel was marched into captivity, Rachel is portrayed as weeping inconsolably for her sons. But, she is ordered to stop weeping because there was hope. Israel would be delivered out of captivity and taken back to the land of Israel (Jeremiah 31:15-17). However, with Herod’s slaughter of the children near Bethlehem, the fullness of Rachel’s hope is crushed again by a tyrant in history. But, with the coming of Christ, Rachel’s hope is renewed!! He is the One who saves His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

CHRIST IS THE NEW MOSES

A new exodus calls for a new Leader. Moses was the great prophet who led Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea; But, Moses announced God would raise up another Prophet like himself to lead another, more powerful exodus. Christ is the New Moses that leads His people out of the bondage of sin and death. Through his death, burial, and resurrection, He leads spiritual Israel across the great, glassy sea to the Promised Land, heaven itself (Revelation 15:2).

- Like Moses, Jesus was the prophet “like me” (Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22, 23: 7:37).
- Like Moses, Jesus had a bounty on his head (Matthew 2:1-13).
- Like Moses, Jesus was hid from the wrath of the king (Matthew 2:13).
- Like Moses who was not recognized for his greatness by his contemporaries, Jesus was not recognized for His importance by his people (Luke 5:21).
- Like Moses who had special access to God, Jesus enjoyed unique fellowship with the Father (John 11:42).
- Like Moses received the Law on the Mt. Sinai, Jesus gave Israel His Law by His authority on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
- Like Moses fasted for 40 days, so Jesus fasted for 40 days (Matthew 4).
- Like Moses appointed 70 elders, Jesus appointed 70 missionaries (Luke 10:1).
- Like Moses received glory on the mountain, Jesus was transfigured with glory on a mountain (Matthew 17).

- Like Moses fed the people Manna, Jesus multiplied the loaves of bread to feed the people (John 6:35). His words were the “words of life.” Like Moses gave the people the water of life in the desert to quench Israel’s thirst, Jesus is the water of life that supplies eternal life for the souls of men (John 6:68; 7:38).
- Like Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so Israel could be healed, Jesus was lifted up at Calvary for the healing (salvation) of men’s souls (John 3:14).
- Like Moses’ burial place was obscure and hidden, so Jesus’ body, by virtue of His resurrection, was nowhere to be located near the place of his death.

CHRIST IS THE LEADER OF A NEW EXODUS

Moses led Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea, but Christ is the leader of the new Exodus, the journey out of sin and death into life (Romans 5:21). When Christ was on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:31), Jesus spoke about his “decease” or literally “the decease or departure of him” with Moses and Elijah. The word translated “decease” is the Greek word *exodon*, which is our English word “exodus.” Luke’s choice of words is not by accident. Jesus was to accomplish the true exodus at Jerusalem. In and through his redemptive death and resurrection, Christ would lead His people out of Egypt (the land of slavery and death) into the true Promise Land (heaven itself).

The old exodus was a glorious redemption, but it only pointed to a new exodus—the exodus out of this world dominated by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (Galatians 1:4).

The OT called for a new exodus (Isaiah 51:9), and in Christ, God laid bare his arm (rolled up his sleeves) and went to work to redeem His people from death and destruction. All were surprised that God’s power resided in a “tender shoot out of dry ground,” but that Tender Shoot became the means of man’s salvation (Isaiah 53:1).

The sending out of the 70 (Luke 10:1) typified the Exodus experience (Numbers 11:16ff)—a new conquest of Canaan; a conquest of the hearts and souls of men in the proclamation of the gospel. While Israel failed their tests in the wilderness, Christ passed His temptation with glory and grandeur (Luke 4:1ff).

Part II

Christ is greater than history, greater than the promises, greater than any of us fully know.

CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER

In the Jewish mind, the Passover was the greatest act of redemption in the history of the nation. It has been celebrated faithfully for over 3,500 years. It was and is a marvelous display of redemptive love.

Christians, however, do not celebrate the Passover, they celebrate Christ, *Yeshua Hamashiah*, who is “our Passover sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The lamb’s blood protected residents in the blood-splattered homes from the death angel that slew the firstborn of Egypt, but Christ’s blood “takes away sins” and protects us from eternal punishment (Hebrews 10:4)– to save those who take shelter from God’s wrath under the blood of Jesus. The former saved Israelites in time, but the latter saves all Christians for all eternity. One was a shadow, the other the reality. We do not celebrate the shadow, we rejoice in and celebrate the Prototype. We do not practice the Seder; Rather, we remember the Savior in the breaking of bread, the “Lamb without blemish or defect . . . chosen before the creation of the world” to protect us from wrath and judgment (1 Peter 1:19, 20).

But, He is more than the fulfillment of the Passover. Christ is the fulfillment of every feast.

- He is our Feast of Firstfruits (*Bikkurim*), “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20); and,
- He is our Feast of Unleaven Bread—“the bread of life” (John 6:35); and,
- He is our Pentecost and Law Giver and “end of the law” and our Boaz and the One to Whom the *Ruach K’doshen* unites believers into one body; and,
- He is our Feast of Trumpets and Head of the New Creation and the one to whom all believers are gathered, our *Rosh Hashannah*, and our Isaac; and,
- He is our *Yom Kippur* and Atonement and Propitiation; and,
- He is our *Succoth* who tabernacled among men and the ultimate Temple in the New Jerusalem—“for the Lord God Almighty and Lamb are the temple thereof” (Revelation 21:22).

Christians do not go back to the weak and beggarly elements of Israel’s festivals except as a tool to broaden our perspective on the glories of Christ and His marvelous accomplishments. He is the meaning of all of Israel’s festivals. These are “a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17).

CHRIST IS GOD’S SERVANT

Ancient Israel is portrayed idealistically as the God’s Servant.

*Isaiah 41:8 But thou, **Israel**, art my **servant**, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.*

*Isaiah 44:1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my **servant**; and **Israel**, whom I have chosen:*

When Jesus was baptized, a rare event occurred wherein the Father spoke from heaven announcing, “This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased;” as the Servant of the Lord in Matthew 12:18, and the Beloved Son on the Mt. of Transfiguration (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 12: Matthew 17:5).

Historically, Israel was a dismal failure as a servant of God’s pleasure. Israel’s stewardship ended in judgement, expulsion, and exile (586 B.C.); and, after a second chance was expelled again in 70 A.D.

But, Another has come. Jesus was the Servant Israel could never be. His baptism was an announcement to the world that God’s Son, His faithful servant, the True Israel, had arrived in history. The christened Servant fulfilled the prophecy; “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7); and, the “Spirit of God descended as a dove lightening upon Him . . .” and the Father was well pleased.

God’s anointed Servant entered history to inaugurate the kingdom of God and to redeem men out from underneath the authority of Satan, sin, and death.

CHRIST IS THE NEW ISRAEL

There is much emphasis today on the false “Israel” or the “other Israel” in the Middle East. But, all of this hullabaloo is wasted energy and a diversion from the greatness of Christ!

The name “Israel” means “prince with God.” The nation took its name from Jacob who was renamed “Israel.” But, Jacob, as wonderful as he was, could hardly be God’s true prince.

The nation was promised that they would be God’s special treasure (Exodus 19:5). But, the promise was conditioned upon Israel’s obedience. As history unfolded and Israel began to disobey God’s laws, she forfeited her right to the promises. But, as history unfolded, God provided a new Prince, the true Prince, the Prototype of the type. He prevailed. Because Jesus obeyed God’s law, He became God’s special Treasure and inherited all of Israel’s promises. All who place their faith in Christ as their Representative join the Messianic community, and they become a member of the New Israel, the true people of God.

- Jacob was a type, the shadow of the true Israel of God; but Jesus is the bright Prototype, the true Israel of God.

- Israel was a descent of Abraham; Jesus was the true Seed promised to Abraham.
- Israel was called the LORD's "firstborn;" Jesus is God's Firstborn (Colossian 1:15, 16).
- Israel was delivered out of Egypt from bondage to Pharaoh; Jesus was called up out of Egypt to deliver Israel from bondage to sin (Matthew 2:15).
- Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea and through the River Jordan to enter the land of Canaan to take possession of Canaan (Joshua 3): Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan and later passed through the rivers of death and emerged victorious over this enemy so that we might take possession of Heaven itself (Romans 6:7-8).
- Israel was tested in the wilderness for 40 years and failed; Jesus was tested in the wilderness of Judea for 40 days and passed the test (Matthew 4:1ff).
- Unlike Israel who failed to obey God's law, Christ fulfilled the law. He accomplished Israel's obligations to God. In his life, ***He was Israel's Representative*** and fulfilled Israel's covenant responsibilities to God. In His death, He removed the curse of covenant breaking by becoming a curse for us / them (Galatians 3:1-14). In His glorification, all believers in God's Prince will share in the glory and blessing of His covenant accomplishments.
- Not only is Christ ***Israel's Representative and means of obeying God's law for them; He is God's Representative (Mediator)***, the means or locus of covenant blessings promised to Israel by God if they obeyed Him. So, in Christ, believing Jews become members of the spiritual Israel (true Israel or the New Israel which is composed of Christians and the community of the redeemed—Romans 9:6).
- Israel entered their inheritance in Canaan. Following Jesus' second baptism of suffering and blood at the cross, the True Israel entered into glory, the heavenly Canaan.
- Unlike Israel who complained in the wilderness, Jesus stood His ground saying, "Not my will, but thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42).
- Israel received the law, the objective standard of God's will; but, Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, the subjective standard of God's will. The Jews received the law on "Pentecost;" the disciples first received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost Who enables believers to keep the law (Romans 10:4; Matthew 4:17; Romans 8:4).
- Matthew presents Jesus as the *True Seed of Abraham* (Chapter one). Christ is the One through whom the world is to be blessed. Matthew closes his book with Jesus' command to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. If Jesus is the one through whom the promise is being fulfilled, then He can lay claim to being Abraham's true descendant—

the true Israel of God. Jesus is the true Israel because He did everything Israel was supposed to do (Galatians 3:14).

- Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of David. As Israel's king, Christ represents true Israel, and is David's greater Son (Matthew 1:1ff).
- From our perspective, Jesus' genealogy makes him the last Jew to whom we can truly trace ancestry. No living person (even Jews by faith) today can honestly trace his own lineage from Abraham. Even if a modern day so called "Jew" claimed to be the Christ in the future, there is no way to verify his claim. But, the ancestry of Christ tracing His lineage back to Abraham has been in the custody of the church for more than two-thousand years.
- Jesus is called the "Servant of the Lord." He was made a "covenant" for the people. In Isaiah (42:1ff), distinguishing between the Messianic Servant and Israel as the Servant is at times difficult to determine. Isaiah obviously intended for us to understand the Servant of the Lord as the true Israel of God, the Son to come.
- Israel had a temple, but Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT temple as the Spirit of God inhabited His body (John 1:14-18; 2:19-20; Colossians 2:9).
- Israel was promised the Land of Canaan; Jesus is the Promised Land and anyone "in Christ" is in the Land of Milk and Honey.

A person who believes in the Son is in Christ and is a member of the True Israel of God. If a Jew or any man for that matter does not abide in the Son, he is NOT part of Israel. A person who claims to be a part of Israel by virtue of the Jewish faith or by bloodline is deceived (Matthew 3:1-10). Only those who trust Christ are part of the true Israel of God (Romans 9: 6f). The one "in Christ" will "inherit these things" including the "new heavens and the new earth."

CHRIST IS THE NEW TORAH

The Torah was a true but incomplete expression of God's righteousness; Jesus is the Living Torah, God's perfect and complete expression of God's righteousness.

Psalms 119:142 Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true.

The law was an objective representation of God's character; Jesus is God's subjective expression of His character.

Israel was graced with the Torah, but Jesus is the Living Torah—the perfect reflection of God's attributes.

Only Jesus could say, “But I say unto you . . .” (Matthew 5:32). He taught as if He was in authority and in total command of the Torah. He came not to destroy the Torah, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). He taught as Israel’s new Law-giver (Matthew 7:29) and He chided men for placing tradition (man’s law order) as a priori over the commandments of God (Matthew 15:3). He is the “end of the law” (Romans 10:4); that is, the completion, fulfillment, perfection, and summit of the Torah. *His obedience to the law on and behalf of the sinner saves the believer. Because Christ is the New Torah, we are saved by works—His works as our Representative before the Father.*

CHRIST IS THE NEW JOSHUA

The name “Jesus” (with a harsh German “J”) is a translation of the Greek name, Iesou, which means “Savior” or “Yeshua” (Hebrew) or “Yah is salvation.” The name “Jesus” is a declaration that He is the ultimate Salvation of God’s people. General Joshua led Israel to a great but temporary victory in Canaan over the Late Bronze Canaanites. Jesus as the ultimate Commander and as such leads men in victory over Satan, sin, and death. With sin propitiated, the debt is paid. Christ gives the true people of God eternal rest from their fears and labors in the House of God by virtue of their faith in Iesou —the greater Joshua (Hebrews 4).

CHRIST IS THE NEW PRIESTHOOD

OT priests worked day and night in the ministry of reconciliation. Despite all the priests, and all the work, and all the sacrifices offered, those priests were unable to perfect the people of God. But, Jesus, a priest of the order of Melchizedek, succeeded in interceding for true Israel based on His superior ministry, superior covenant, superior sacrifice, and superior priesthood (Hebrews 5:1ff).

CHRIST IS THE NEW MEDIATOR

The Jews esteemed the law and saw the law as a mediator between God and man. In their minds, the more one kept the law, the closer he became to God. But, in the gospel we learn that Christ, not the law, is the mediator between God and man. A perfect man, not a perfect legal system, stands between the eternal Judge and mortal men. Our Lord, not Mohammed or Buddha or Shiva, is the One who Represents God to men, and men to God (1 Timothy 2:5).

CHRIST IS THE NEW TEMPLE

Aaron served in the earthly tabernacle “pitched by men,” but Christ serves in the heavenly sanctuary built by the Lord (Hebrews 8-9). The earthly tabernacle was temporary, but the heavenly temple is eternal. The earthly priests were imperfect men, but our Great High Priest is perfect; the earthly priest’s work was never finished, but Christ’s work is complete, once for all

(Hebrew 10). The earthly temple belonged to Israel, but the New Temple belongs to all men who believe regardless of their ethnicity. The earthly temple was temporary – a mere shadow of good things to come; but, the heavenly temple is permanent and a true fulfillment of good things promised.

Further, He is our temple, and we are in Him; and, He in us. In the eternal city, John declares, “I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22).

CHRIST IS THE NEW SACRIFICE

Every year thousands of lambs, goats, and bulls were offered on the brazen altar. But, none of them or the whole of them could take away sin. But, Christ’s one sacrifice covers sins forever; cleanses the conscience forever; and perfects the elect forever (Hebrews 9, 10). While the OT sacrifices secured a temporary benefit for Israel, the NT reveals that Christ’s sacrificed “obtained eternal redemption (ransom or release from debt)” (9:12).

CHRIST IS THE FULFILLMENT OF ALL ISRAEL’S SHADOWS

The Apostle Paul’s ministry was dogged by Judaizers who marshaled a retreat from the High Land of Christ to hunker down to the lowlands of Jewish tradition. The Book of Hebrews exposes the inferiority of Israel’s shadows and the folly of following apostates by revealing the superior Person and Position of the Lord Jesus over all of Israel’s holy people and sacred institutions. He is the substance (1:3) of the OT shadows:

- Christ is superior to the angels (Hebrews 1).
- Christ is superior to Adam the representative man (Hebrews 2).
- Christ is superior to Moses the great law-giver (Hebrews 3).
- Christ is superior to Joshua the great military leader (Hebrews 4).
- Christ is a superior Priest to Aaron (Hebrews 5).
- Christ is in a superior Priesthood to that of the Aaronic Priesthood (Hebrews 7).
- Christ servers in a superior tabernacle—the true tabernacle built by God (Hebrews 8:1-6).
- Christ is the mediator of a superior covenant (Hebrews 8:7ff)
- Christ is the superior sacrifice that perfects the sinner (Hebrews 9, 10).
- Christ is superior to the Torah as Advocate of those who trust Him (Hebrews 10:19-39).

CHRIST IS THE MEANING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

All the types, promises, and demands of moral law find their complete and perfect fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam, Moses, the exodus, the sacrifices, the feasts, the law, the priesthood, the offerings, and the temple are shadows (*typos*) of a greater reality—Christ, the Son of God.

The tabernacle, the law, and the shadows do not come first, but second in the Divine mind. All reflect first principles which is Christ Himself. He is First who is before all things, that He might have preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:17, 18).

Few among us realize the greatness and magnificence of Christ and how He is the culmination of every promise, every hope, every prophetic utterance, every king, every sacrifice, every law, and every feast.

The NT Christians faced the constant threat of retreat from the gospel back into the OT laws and feasts (Galatians). In the modern world, we witness believers plunge into secularism and humanism because they are unable to grasp the greatness of the Savior. Many believers are playing in the shadows keeping feasts and festivals when they should be walking in the light. We cannot do better than to reflect on Christ as the meaning of the Old Testament and to remember Him in the “Breaking of Bread”—the one and only feast for Christians (1 Corinthians 11:23ff)!

Let us think more and better of our Lord Jesus Christ.

20. THE DAY JESUS WAS FIRED

“They began to implore Him to leave their region” - Mark 5:17

When Jesus arrived in the “country of the Gadarenes” early in the morning on the eastern shores of Lake Galilee, He was met by a wild, screaming maniac running naked through a graveyard practicing self-mutilation with sharp stones. Having broken free of his chains, he raced toward Jesus from the mausoleum shouting obscenities and begging Jesus not to torment him.

Our Lord immediately recognized the man was demon possessed, questioned the spirit whose name was “Legion,” and performed an exorcism by ordering the evil spirits to depart and leave the man alone. High pitched voices shrieked from the man. Without warning, hundreds of squealing, screaming pigs stampeded toward the sea cliffs kicking up dust, terrifying the sea gulls, and diving kamikaze style into the sea. The disciples stared at the corpses of pork wondering what in the world just happened! What a scene!

Immediately, the tender disciples began to minister to the man and to comfort him. Curious about the noise and commotion, local tenants marched toward the band of men with sticks, ropes, and chains. When they saw Jesus, the twelve disciples, and the man named “Legion” sitting calmly on a rock, clothed, and in his right mind, they were seized with fear—a strange reaction for sure!

Immediately, the locals decided they didn’t want this preacher in their home town and “implored Jesus to leave the region;” that is, they fired the Lord as they did not want him for their pastor . . . and Jesus left.

Think about it. Jesus, the Son of God, the most competent, powerful preacher who ever lived was asked to turn in His resignation and to leave the country! This community preferred to have their swine and a naked madman in their corporation rather than Jesus!

We are living in crazy times where evil is good and good is evil. Madmen control government. Maniacs protect baby killers and promote Sodomite marriages. The bloated State demands more and more taxes to feed its insatiable appetite for money while banks are foreclosing on millions of homes because families have lost their jobs or don’t make enough money to pay the bills. Parasitic lawyers serve the will of wealthy corporations. Depraved politicians get elected to office. The Navy and other military divisions are firing Christian chaplains because they pray in the name of Jesus. Feminists eager for power and the authority to kill babies have manufactured a

war against women. Pharisaical legislators pump out trillions of new laws, destroying freedom, eliminating rights, creating criminals out of every man, and enslaving Americans. Instead of punishing criminals, panicky politicians beg their peers to confiscate guns from innocent gun owners. IRS agents threaten the poor with incarceration for not paying protection money. Cops patrol our streets as uniform gangs ready to execute non-conformists who disobey a barking donut cruncher. And, if this is not bad enough, half-naked, cheering college students parade through the streets praising our new police state. But, it is worse! Sugar sweet Christians have lost their salt. Thus, they are irrelevant amid a cultural revolution.

If you have not been fired from a job or two in your lifetime, you may not be following Jesus very closely.

If you have not been asked to resign your employment, either you are blind and ignorant about the criminal activities around you, or you are treasonously committed to being politically correct in the midst of corruption. We simply have too many nice, “get along” and “go along” “holy rollers.” Compromise is built on give and take, but there can be no give and take on the Ten Commandments or the gospel. Christ is King of the Nations whether men like it or not (Jeremiah 10:7; Revelation 1:5).

Further, if you have not been kicked out of a government church, you are probably not following Jesus closely. The American church has lost its vinegar and salt because of moral and Biblical compromises. When government is god in the minds of churchmen, deacon boards cannot be expected not to betray soldiers of the cross.

Silence in the midst of a cultural revolution is unacceptable. A follower of Jesus cannot trade in his integrity for peace or money or job advancement. He is not to make an idol out of his job or ministry. Rights are non-negotiable. *The great question is not whether we live in a sick, corrupt, compromising, legalistic society governed by rebels against King Jesus and His law-order, but whether there is enough health in the body politic to resist the Godlessness of our age?*

21. PRECIOUS JESUS

1 Peter 2:4 . . . rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God

Men are in search of precious stones, precious oil, and precious moments. Before us stands something more valuable than fine wine and precious jewels - a living stone, the Son of God.

Christians call Him precious Jesus. While He is rejected of men, He is cherished by God and by us.

HIS NAME IS PRECIOUS.

Jesus is the sweetest name I know. Oh, how it hurts to hear men use His name in vain.

His name means “Savior.” He was God’s gift “to save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). He does not assist or help men to be saved. He saves! Who can break the power of sins’ chains? Precious Jesus!

*“There is something about the name Jesus
Something about the name Jesus.
It is the sweetest name I know
Oh how I love the name Jesus, Oh how I love the name Jesus
It is the sweetest name I know.”*

(Lela B. Long, Jesus is the Sweetest Name I Know)

*“He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.”*

(Wesley, Oh, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing)

HIS NATURE IS PRECIOUS.

Men are mortal and finite. But, not Jesus! He is the God-man – the physical manifestation of the one, true, infinite, personal triune Spirit. Men have believed since the earliest times our Lord has two distinct natures in union but “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation;” that He is the God-man having both the nature of God and the nature of man. He is

the unique Son of God, fully God, but fully man. He was the Word made flesh who dwelt among us on this earth as the God-man. Who can grasp it? God among us!

HIS CHARACTER IS PRECIOUS.

All men “have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” But, not Jesus! All the virtues of justice and grace, righteousness and love, masculinity and femininity coalesce in Him. He is tough and tender; strict but just; loving but not permissive; holy, but not aloof. He has no outstanding virtue because all virtue resides in Him in perfect balance and harmony.

HIS POSITION IS PRECIOUS.

Three offices existed in Israel and it was a privilege to be attached to one of them. Jesus was appointed to all three offices as God’s Prophet, Priest, and King. Jeremiah calls Him the King of the Nations (10:7). Isaiah calls Him the LORD Who is our Judge, Lawgiver, and King (33:22). Paul announces Him the “one Mediator” between God and man and the King of king, and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 2:5, 6:15). James simply refers to Him as the “only Lawgiver” (4:12). Being exalted to the right hand of God means that His administration has been inaugurated and is in effect. He is the Prophet that speaks the Word of God to us; the Priest that mediates our concerns to God; the King that rules our lives and governs the events of history.

HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER IS PRECIOUS.

He is the unique Son of God without beginning or end — “from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days” (Micah 5:2).

The Father said on three occasions, “This is my beloved Son. Hear ye Him.” He is the “root out of dry ground,” “the arm of the Lord,” “the mighty God” in human form. He was the one man on earth fully committed to doing the will of God. Obedient unto death, He is “joy of the LORD,” the “bread of God” for hungry souls, the precious Son in whom the Father is well pleased.

HIS WORK IS PRECIOUS

Creation with all its marvels and mysteries is credited to Him.

Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him.

HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN REDEMPTION ARE PRECIOUS.

In redeeming believing humanity He removed the curse all the way back to Adam. In his life He kept the law; and, in his death, He met the claims of Divine holiness. There is no sin so bad or stain so deep He cannot cleanse. He saves the chief of sinners and makes the dirtiest sinner as white as snow.

Death is an enemy! Man's desire for life is not found in science or medicine, but in the gospel. In His resurrection, He triumphed over death to shower the hope of eternal life upon believing men.

But, not everyone thinks that Jesus is precious. When our Lord stood before Herod, the soldiers esteemed Him as nothing.

Luke 23:11 And Herod with his men of war set him at naught, and mocked him,

To the politicians of that day, Jesus was nothing, a zero, a blank in history.

Think of it! The Creator, the Architect of the universe, the King of Israel, the Son of God in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge was standing before them, and in their warped opinion, Christ's value was considered less than dust on a scale. To them, He was the Stone of Stumbling and a Rock of Offence (1 Peter 2:8).

To them He was a crumb, but to us He is the Bread of Life. To us He is precious Jesus, our Lord and Savior, the Lamb of God, a precious Cornerstone in whom are all the excellences of Divinity reside, the just One, the Shepherd of our souls, the Chief Shepherd to Whom dominion and glory belong forever and ever (1 Peter).

22. THE LAMB OF GOD

This title is only found in John's writings.

The title "Lamb of God" was not a title preached by Jesus about himself, nor was it a title used by the Apostles in their preaching in Acts.

John the Baptist assigned this title to Christ (John 1:19), and John the Apostle uses this title to describe Christ in heaven. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and it appears to be a title that only Christians can fully appreciate.

The title refers to the purpose of Jesus coming to earth. It describes His work as Redeemer, the lamb-substitute for sinners (Revelation 7:14). Furthermore, it is a reminder that the meek Jesus-Lamb will be the mighty General Who will conquer the world and bring it into subjection to the will of the Father in Kingdom consummation (Revelation 5:1ff; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

The title "Lamb of God" has a history and it is a statement of sufficiency.

There was a lamb sufficient to cover the sins of a single man (Genesis 4); a lamb sufficient to save a family from death (Exodus 12); a lamb sufficient to cover the sins of a nation (Leviticus 16); and, the Lamb who is sufficient to take away the sins of the world (John 1:19).

Jesus is called the Lamb of God because blood is necessary to cleanse sins; that is, because blood is the currency of the spirit world, Jesus had to shed His blood as the Lamb of God to pay for your ransom. No other currency is accepted by the great Spirit.

The title "Lamb of God" inspires the character of Christian ministry.

It spurs sacrificial service and a bold witness for the gospel (Revelation 12:11). Unlike the Muslims, the Christian does not take up arms to threaten and win converts. The title is a reminder that in our witness to the world the Gladiator Gospel is proclaimed by God's attack lambs, that is, our witness is not only to be bold and persuasive but gentle and harmless. We use persuasion, not a sword (Revelation 5:1-7; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:4; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23; 22:1, 3).

23. THE ARM OF THE LORD REVEALED

Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? . . .

This text reveals the maximum force output the “Arm of the Lord” exerted at Calvary to save sinners.

Every word ripples with power. Entire New Testament themes regarding the person and work of our Lord are compressed into the beef and brawn of this passage. And, our task is to decompress the power wedged in this Scripture.

The text begins with a question, “to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

All the wisdom, knowledge, eternal power, force, and vigor of the durable, incorruptible, strength, and bone-crushing muscle of God is a reference to the Babe in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling clothes, and are summed up in Isaiah’s Messianic metaphor, “the arm of the Lord.” He is none other than “El-Shaddai” – a stout title derived from the male deltoids, biceps, and pectoral muscle groups.

The answer to the question “to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed” is given to the disciples.

The Messiah’s humanity, purity, vulnerability, tenderness, innocence, sensitivities, and gentleness are contained in the description, “He grew up before him as a tender shoot.” Here is a man that is “touched with the feelings of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15).

The “dry ground” references the abusive, unfriendly, chilly, ungodly, censorious and hostile depravity of Jesus’ opponents where He chose to live. He was God’s King carving out a kingdom built on moral power.

When the disciples met the Christ, there was nothing unusual about his appearance. He was not physically bigger or more handsome than other men. There was no outstanding manly beauty that lured men to Him. He was not the kind of man people would have voted for the title of Mr. Universe, but there was no criticism of him being effeminate. He was in all respects, a man’s man, an alpha male, tough and tender.

In his external form and body, he appears to be a normal, commonplace, garden-variety Hebrew. All the depictions of Christ as a chiseled, well-groomed hunk by painters are creations of men and not Divinely inspired.

But, in spirit, masculine, strength, power, wisdom, and ax-grinding confrontation bulldozed its way through the citadels of Jewish corruption conquering hardened hearts.

The title “man of sorrows acquainted with grief” embraces all of our Lord’s suffering and the spiritual hypertrophy He experienced due to the distresses, agitations, cares, pressures, burdens, afflictions, grievances, heartbreaks, disappointments, hurts, strains and pains that He endured among the Jews of that day.

The nation’s stunning ridicule, scorn, and contempt for Christ by the Jews is compressed into the phrases “He was despised” and we “esteemed him not.”

The phrase “He has born our grief and carried our sorrows” refers to His broad-shouldered power to dead lift the burdens, sickness, infirmities, maladies, ailments, disorders, emotional and mental distress that weighs down humanity.

On top of this, the disciples observed that not only did Christ suffer because of the “contradiction of sinners against himself,” but a unique suffering labeled “smitten of God” became the optimum strength test during his agony on the cross.

To suffer at the hands of men is one matter, but suffering caused by Heaven itself is quite another.

To endure abuse by irascible men takes manly strength, but to endure the punishment of an offended deity takes the muscular grit of El-Shaddai.

Some men are called to endure the anger of men, but the “arm of the Lord” endured the wrath of an offended God.

Our Lord’s feverish agony and “chastisement” at the cross caused by the weight of our carnal sins, godlessness, rebellion, delinquency, neglects, immorality, malfeasance, prurience, pride, fleshly attractions, promiscuity, concupiscence, perversity, obscenity, profanity, vulgarity, sensuality, anger, wrath, dissensions, slander, contumelies, sedition and the like are squeezed into terms like “our transgressions” and “our iniquities”(Galatians 5:19ff).

The phrases “wounded” and “bruised for our iniquities” reference our Lord’s entire endurance test at the cross including his whippings, beatings, impalement, discomfort, pains, throes, agony, misery, passion, torment, bleeding, thirst, and His mental, emotional, and physical anguish.

The phrase by “his stripes are we healed” refers to life-saving benefits procured by our Lord’s perseverance at the cross, and includes the gleaming benedictions of salvation, reconciliation, forgiveness, justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, and resurrection from the dead.

All these salvic cures are needed because of the infirmities and disorders caused by man eating fruit from the Poisonous Tree.

The entire history of Adam’s autonomous race with its shameful sin and rebellion against God are simply summed up as, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way” (53:6).

We can do a lot worse, but we can hardly do better than to consider the maximum power output the “Arm of the Lord” exerted at Calvary to save sinners.

“Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing, my great Redeemer’s praise,

The glories of my God and king, the triumphs of his grace!”

24. CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:24 "Christ the power of God . . ."

Need power?

Men are in search of power. There are power drinks, power foods, power words, power sales, power investments, and power advertising. Power religions abound. We know of the power of money, the power of love, and that "knowledge is power." But, there is a power of God! And, that power is the Lord Jesus Christ!

CHRIST IS THE POWER OF GOD AS SEEN IN CREATION:

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16).

The super nova and the tiny hydrogen atom were scattered through the universe by Christ. Entire galaxies litter the heavens and millions of lanterns in our own galaxy glow endlessly without flickering or exhausting their fuel. For by the Son of God "all things consist." We have been taught this blue marble we call "Earth" floats in a Sun-centered orbit never varying from its course around a burning star creating the perfect environment for life—not too hot and not too cold. Water falls from the sky nourishing all creatures great and small. Who has not marveled at the perfection of the human hand, or the marvels of the human ear, or the camera of the human eye? Who made all these marvels? It was none other than "Christ, the power of God."

CHRIST IS THE POWER OF GOD IN HISTORY:

The Son of God tabernacled among men. The Immortal became mortal. The Eternal became temporal. The Spiritual became flesh and dwelt among us as "the only begotten God."² The babe grew into a man wherein He commanded the fish in the sea; hushed the winds; and, quieted the tempest. The lame man leaping, the blind man seeing, the deaf man hearing, and the dumb man praising provide evidence Christ was the power of God. Hell trembled, heaven marveled, fears departed, and hearts sang when Lazarus was raised from the dead. Disease departed by his command and funerals stopped their march by His touch. In His resurrection the citadels of hell

² The term "begotten" (monogenh.j) is better translated "one of a kind" or "unique" rather than "born in time."

tumbled like the walls of Jericho and the bright rays of the Easter sunrise scattered the dark fears that blinded all of humanity. He is the Christ of History, the Power of God.

CHRIST IS THE POWER OF GOD IN TIME NOW FOR HE “SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD” AS THE LORD CHRIST.

The reigns of history steering the chariot of destiny are in wounded hands. Ascended to the right hand of the Father, He is the Mediator between God and men; the Referee in the game of life; the Arbitrator of all disputes; the Judge with gavel in hand. He is the Head of every man (1 Corinthians 11:1-3); the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22); and the King of the Nations (Jeremiah 10:7). Without the use of a scimitar or sword or guillotine or rifle or threat of imprisonment, he transformed nations and turned the “world upside down” (Acts 17:6-7). By him doctors were humbled and fishermen became famous. By him the church chartered a course through the blood splattered seas of Nero (67 AD), Domitian (81 AD), Maximus (235 AD) and Queen Mary (1550 AD). Through him the “bloody martyrs” became the seed of the church.” Through Him the truth endured the disappointments of apostates, the betrayal of prelates and the hypocrisy of defiled bishops. Prayerlessness, church wars, arrogant kings, persecutions, factions, blood and pride cannot stop Him. He is our advocate, Savior, and Redeemer. He is reigning now as “King of kings and Lord of lords” and He is coming again to take vengeance on “those who do not know God” (2 Thessalonians 1:8). He saves sinners, forgives transgressors, justifies the wicked, gives strength to the weak, and hope to the deprived. He is alive now hearing prayers, judging nations, and comforting the afflicted. Court is in session. He is Christ, the power of God.

But, our Lord did not use His power to escape the agony of the cross or the terrors of death that we might have power to become “sons of God” (John 1:12-13).

Need power?

Christ can turn a keg of beer into groceries; a sinner into a saint; bring good out of evil; make mountains into a valley; restore the years which the locust have eaten, and make the weak strong (Hebrews 11:34). Know Him, believe Him, trust Him! He is Christ the power of God.

25. CHRIST THE WISDOM OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:24 "Christ, the wisdom of God . . ."

Need wisdom?

Men are in search of wisdom. From the monks in Tibet to the erudite schools of Harvard, men seek the illusive virtue we call wisdom.

However, the Bible tells us that Christ is the wisdom of God and any assertion contrary to this is untenable and unreasonable.

Christ is so simple to understand, a child can be instructed by him. So profound, doctors stumble over His truth. Christ is so deep the intellects of history have yet to touch the depths. His is a bottomless sea and a shoreless ocean that "passeth all understanding."

The Greeks dedicate mid-Pentacostarion as a time to reflect on Christ as the *Hagia Sophia*.

He that would be wise would do well to navigate his craft in the revelation of His Word to explore Christ on the sea of Holy Scripture.

CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD OUTSIDE OF HISTORY

In his wisdom, He created the heavens and the earth—the heavens with all its billions of galaxies, molecular clouds, and luminescent hydrogen stars—the earth with its burning lava core and cool crust of rock and undulating seas of water hovered over by an atmosphere of oxygen and nitrogen perfectly adapted for life.

Who understands the depth of the science behind planetary nebula or supernovas and white dwarfs? These glowing gas furnaces spiraling at supersonic speeds in a global dome traveling to nowhere challenge the greatest intellects. According to reports from NASA, scientists have sent the Hubble craft into space in search of another planet fit for life with stunning disappointment. Only this little blue dot, if it is indeed a sphere, has all the conditions necessary for human existence! It is Christ our Lord that scattered the sunbeams and anchored the pillars of the earth in thin air. Oh, how our hearts burst with joy knowing that the Creator was here—on earth—on this planet reconciling the world to Himself.

Before the world was made, Christ died for sinners.

Before Adam sinned there was the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Before sin's wretched virus infected humanity, the Lamb's blood that makes men white as snow was spilled at the cross.

Before the first star was formed, he planned the temple, the Levitical priesthood, the sacrificial system, his entrance into history as the way of salvation, the cross, the resurrection and the new heavens and the new earth. He is the Lamb of God, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the door of the Sheep, the Great Shepherd, the way, the truth, and the life—the great “I AM”—man's everlasting hope as the “resurrection and the life.”

CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD WITHIN HISTORY

In his childhood, Christ confounded doctors. He sunk the warships of criticism launched at him by the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. Spellbound crowds surrounded him like honey bees seeking the nectar of truth dripping from his lips. Prostitutes, tax collectors, and soldiers were chained to his eloquence. He never cussed; never complained; never shouted. He was never silent when he should have spoken or speaking when He should have been silent. There was no question he did not answer and no answer He did not question; He unraveled mysteries as well as locked them in parables.

In Christ, truth was installed on a throne and wickedness sentenced to a scaffold. Kings searched for him but He preferred the company of fishermen and children.

One word from his lips caused Lazarus to rise from the grave. One touch cleansed a leper; cured a fever in Peter's mother-in-law; resolved a chronic discharge of blood in a woman afflicted for twelve years; opened the eyes of the blind; unlocked the ears of the deaf and the mouth of the mute; and turned a funeral into a celebration. His teaching shed light on Moses; was deeper than Plato; greater than Solomon; more binding than the Supreme Court. He is Christ, the Wisdom of God.

CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD OVER HISTORY

He sits at the right hand of God ruling as the unseen, unsung King of the nations. All of history moves toward the kingdom of God wherein He conquers hearts; dispenses mercy; orders justice; and, wages war against the forces of evil. In love and truth, He commands an army of volunteers that wage war against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness and their miscreants in the political and commercial system.

With the sword of truth He cast down arguments and everything that exalts itself above the knowledge of God. His judgment begins with the house of God wherein he purifies hearts,

refines sinners, and perfects good deeds. He does it without wealth or empowering lust or bolstering the pride of men.

He can take doubters like C.S. Lewis, Lew Wallis, Simon Greenleaf, and Lee Strobel and turn them into champions of the faith. He took Saul, the “chief of sinners” and turned him in to Christianity’s greatest theologian . . . and he can take you and me, unravel the knots, and glorify God through these vessels of clay.

Need wisdom?

Christ is the wisdom of God.

26. SUFFICIENCY OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Hebrews 10:10 in the which will we are having been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time.

Christ's death is sufficient

- to save sinners
- to save sinners from judgment
- to save sinners from the judgment of God
- to save sinners from the judgment of an offended God
- to save sinners from the judgment of a holy offended God
- to save sinners from the judgment of an angry, holy offended God
- to save sinners from the judgment of an angry, holy offended God Who still loves us.
- to save sinners from the judgment of an angry, holy offended God by giving His Son
- to save sinners from the judgment of an angry, holy offended God by giving His Son to pay for all our debts.
- to save sinners from the judgment of an angry, holy offended God by giving His Son once out of love to pay for all our debts forever.

27. THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD

Have you ever *wondered* about how to get God's attention . . . how you can have power with God?

We would do well to learn the message Abel, the first prophet, announced to mankind (Luke 11:50-51).

PROPHET ABEL HAS A MESSAGE FOR MEN

Cain and able were both born sinners.

Cain and able were brothers in the same fallen family.

Both Cain and Abel needed a right standing in the eyes of their Creator.

Cain brought beans, broccoli, and beets, the hard earned fruits of his labor to God, but the LORD was nonplussed by his offering.

Abel brought blood and God accepted his offering.

Abel proclaimed a truth: men are redeemed by blood . . . that blood speaks to God . . . that God values blood sacrifice.

THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD.

Of what interest are vegetables or silver and gold to a Living Spirit? Every voodoo doctor in New Orleans knows that "*blood is the currency of the spirit world; that blood attracts the spirits.*"

And, so it is with the Christian religion: "without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

Blood is the currency of the spiritual world and blood speaks to God. The blood of Abel's lamb *shouted* out for pardon. The blood of Abel *cried* out for vengeance. And, the blood of Christ *thunders* forgiveness for trusting sinners.

*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.*

*Genesis 4:10 And he said, ". . . the voice of thy brother's blood **crieth unto me** from the ground.*

Not all blood matters . . . but innocent blood speaks, shouts, cries, conveys, communicates, and discharges debt to a holy God.

If you want to get God's attention, forget your petty, puny, peddling goodness upon which you may rely in approaching the Creator.

Rely upon the shed blood of Christ; that is, "under stand" or "stand under" the blood of Christ as your clearance to enter His presence.

GOD LOVES CLEAN

God is holy; man is a sinner. What can a sinner do to cleanse his soul? What liquid detergent can remove the stain of sin? Will fasting or meditation or alms giving purify the heart? Oh, that it was that simple. But, it isn't! There is no religious practice that can delete man's transgressions. There is no detergent in the world that can sanitize the heart. *But, the blood of Christ can satisfy the claims of Almighty God, and cleanse the conscience.*

*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,***

*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;*

*Revelation 12:11 And they **overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,** and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

If your sins are screaming and condemning you while conveying a message that you are not worthy to pray, then claim the deafening, intense, emphatic, ringing, roaring cries of the blood of Christ shed on your behalf.

*Hebrews 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest **by the blood of Jesus** . . .*

*For "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (1 John 1:7).*

There are **only two religions** in the world, **the religion of beans, broccoli, and beets**, or the **religion of blood**. Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism et al. follow the way of Cain. Only Christianity follows the way of Abel, the religion of blood (1 John 1:5; Hebrews 12:24).

So, if your sins are troubling you, **HEAR Abel the prophet!** God accepts men when they trust in the shed blood of God's lamb. But, if you trust in your vegetables (your works) and religious worthiness, God will not hear you. All religions are not the same nor are they different paths to the same God. There is only one way to God and the path is stained with blood.

Blood is the currency of the spirit world . . . and it is the *tender* God accepts in exchange for souls . . . the *locus standi* for sinners who seek His acceptance and His blessing.

There is something about the blood of Christ and faith in His sacrifice that has power before the Judge of all men.

*Would you be free from your burden of sin?
There's power in the blood, power in the blood;
Would you o'er evil a victory win?
There's wonderful power in the blood.*

*There is power, power, wonder-working power,
In the blood of the Lamb;
There is power, power, wonder-working power,
In the precious blood of the Lamb.*

There is power in the blood. Blood speaks! It is the one voice God hears.

28. CHRIST AS NAUGHT

Luke 23:11 And Herod with his men of war set him at naught, and mocked him,

Forget the war on women. Forget the war on Christmas. The root of all our problems in America is the War on Jesus.

When the popular philosopher, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a survivor of the Russian Gulag, was asked why the WWII generation was in such turmoil, he responded, “We have forgotten God.” From that time on, the media treated him as a pariah.

Notice our text. All the problems of humanity are exposed in this single, crisp statement. Herod, a political maggot, and his brute police force *set Christ at naught!*

Before Herod's court is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the King of the Nations--the most perfect, pure man that ever walked the earth. Having weighed him in their balances, they considered Him as dust on the scales and as worthless as a wooden nickel.

Herod honored wealth, but Christ was just a poor rabbi from Galilee. Herod honored political power, but the Indicted exercised no authority in the Roman political system. In fact, our Lord wasn't even a Roman citizen. Herod honored strength and power, but Christ sat in shackles silent as a lamb. Consequently, Herod estimated Christ's value as NOTHING!

But to the Christian, Christ is our everything! He is our Alpha and Omega, our All in all. Our risen Lord has ascended to the right hand of the Father and now reigns as Lord of lords and King of kings.

The issue of course, is not whether Christ is King of the Nations, but whether men will recognize Him as such . . . *or set Him at naught.*

By listening to modern day psychobabble, we get the idea that all of man's personal problems are due to low self-esteem. But, Herod was not lacking in self-esteem. He knew Caesar. His appointment and authority came from Rome. The power of life and death were in his hands. Herod had values, but Jesus was not one of them. Herod honored men, but Christ was not among them. Herod pursued treasures, but the Savior was not one of his gems.

To the Herod administration, Jesus was the least of all men, a pariah, a worthless Israelite--and, they crucified Him! His problem and the problem of his police force was not lack of self-esteem, but lack of Christ esteem. They set Him at naught.

Are not the social ills of our time the result of a diminishing esteem for Christ: divorce, child abuse, pornography, poverty, abuse of power? And, isn't this the root of our nation's problems today. Because our politicians and the Zionist government do not esteem Christ or His law, they sanction the murder of babies, devise clever taxation schemes to steal from the rich and the poor, provide legal protection for Sodomites, slander one another in political campaigns, distort and spin the truth into a lie, deceive and lie to the American public, spend the nation into irrecoverable debt, and plunder the poor so that the rich get richer.

In listening to NBC or CBS or Fox News or the Wall Street Journal, you get the distinct impression that Christ is completely, totally irrelevant to the social ills plaguing our society. To these media giants, Christ is a zero, a nullity, a peripheral regarding the political problems of our day. To them Christ is pointless, senseless, and useless. Like King Herod, the powerful men of our time set Him at naught.

The defects of our age are not due to a lack of self-esteem, but want of Christ esteem. The fundamental issue in our nation is not jobs, or the economy, equality for women, or getting the rich to pay their fair share, but a nation that has neglected the Son of God- a nation where fathers are ignorant of the Holy Scriptures; a nation led by humanist politicians who like Herod have set Christ as naught.

The solution, then, is for men to think more of Christ and to cease being like Herod who considered Christ as nothing. When men esteem our Lord, wonderful things emerge. Thousands of men are eager and willing to testify to His life changing power.

Where Christ is honored, men admit they are sinners and turn from their evil deeds. They obey His commandments and treat one another with dignity and respect. Men love their wives and wives respect their husbands. Children obey their parents. People harness their evil desires and practice a life of love.

When men see Christ as King, they obey His law and work to convert sinners and to punish evildoers. They work to stop the murder of innocent unborn children; work to expose the evils of homosexuality; work to provide for their families; work to prevent the theft of government through taxation schemes under color of law; work to promote responsibility and freedom; and, work to resist the trend to treat government as some kind of god. More government is not the answer to our nation's ills. Esteem for government is part of the problem. After all, it was the

corrupt government of Herod that executed an innocent man--all because these rulers esteemed Christ as naught.

29. SEVEN TITLES OF THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

How do you become a Christian? The correct answer is by believing the gospel.

But, if you do not know the gospel, how can you believe it? If you do not believe the gospel, how can you be saved from the judgment to come (Hebrews 9:27)?

This is written so that you might know and believe the gospel, and thus, become a true child of God. The gospel is not a country song. The gospel is not the Bible. The gospel is not about how “we should love one another.”

The noun *gospel* (*euvagge,lion*, euangelion) means “good news.” Think of it as the essential content of the early Christian message. It can be defined and identified in the New Testament.

The verb *euangelizo* is used 55 times in the New Testament and it means “to bring good news” or “to announce glad tidings.”

The noun *evangelist* is used 33 times and it describes the one who preaches the message of the gospel.

Today the gospel competes with many wild and extreme forms of thought. Have you have heard the term, “dumbing down of the church?” This refers to simplistic sermons in the pulpit, which produce feel-goody Christians. Have you heard of the “Psycholization of the Church?” This refers to the integration of psychology with the gospel. Have you heard of the word “cult?” This term refers to those who distort the gospel by focusing on some tangential subject. Our culture is tossed about by the crosscurrent of ideas, and it is essential that we sail our ship into the harbor of the gospel on a clear day.

James Stewart, a gospel preacher, recognized **Seven Scriptural Titles** associated with the Greek word *euangelion* that are worth recording.

THE EUANGELION OF GOD

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God. . .

The word *euangelion* is a message from God that has its roots in the history of His Son.

The title “gospel of God” speaks of **the origin of the message**. It is not from man. Early Christians did not make it up. It is not a myth, and it did not evolve from early Christian folklore. The gospel is from God the Father. The gospel is His revelation and it is here because of His sovereign decree.

Have you heard about the dial-a-prayer for atheists? You dial the number and nobody answers. The Bible tells us something different. He has a telephone number and it is **JER 333**. “Call unto me, and I will answer thee . . .” (Jeremiah 33:3).

The title “gospel of God” not only tells us the genesis of the message, but it announces the good news of *God’s existence*. It tells us that there is *one, personal, infinite, virtuous, triune Spirit* who desires to be a redemptive Father, and Who has sent His one and only Son to be the Savior for sinners (Matthew 1:21). The good news is that there is a God who hears and cares. He is YHWH, the Great “I AM THAT I AM,” the covenant keeping God who is, was, and shall be.

The title “gospel of God” not only announces the origin of the gospel and the good news of God’s Being, it also proclaims *the rule of God*. It declares that God is sovereign and is acting in history. He reigns now (Psalm 97)!

THE EUANGELION OF CHRIST

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

The title “gospel of Christ” speaks about ***the theme of the message***.

The gospel is about the *person of Christ*. It is good news that Jesus is God’s Son, the God-man, one in person, co-equal with the Father. Some have lost sight of who Christ really is. Ideas like, “Jesus was a good man,” or that “Jesus was created,” or that “He is one of many religious teachers,” or that “He was an inspiring religious leader” injure the truth about Christ. In the early church, heretics tended to deny the humanity of Christ (1 John 4:1-4). Today, cults tend to deny the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, and His resurrection.

Christians understand Jesus to be the God-man, truly God and truly man. John reveals Him as the “Word” (Logos).

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with Theos, and the Logos was Theos.

In the Greek language, Christ’s deity is very clear (kai. qeo). The Greek letter “o’” (ho) is a definite article indicating the subject (nominative) of the sentence. It should be read this way:

“The Word was God.” The word “qeo.j” does not have an article because it is the predicate nominative.

The official title of the Savior is “The Lord Jesus Christ.” His name “Jesus” is his human name and it is used 608 times before his ascension, but it is used only 62 times after his ascension.

The title “The Lord Jesus Christ” is never mentioned before he ascended, but it is used 81 times after His ascension.

When first century men recognized the supreme state of Christ’s exaltation, they were cut to the heart and surrendered to Him as Lord and Master. He is Lord, not autonomous man. He is Lord, not Caesar. He is Lord, not the state! This truth gave the NT Christians the power to resist Rome and its arrogance in claiming that Augustus was some type of god. Thus, when Peter declared that Jesus is Lord and that there was no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, he declared war on the Roman Empire (Acts 4:12). It was this gospel that our Lord was King that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6-7).

The issue is not whether Jesus is Lord, but will men recognize Him as such! When was the last time you heard his official title in the media, “The Lord Jesus Christ?” Oh, that men would repent of the blasphemy and begin confessing him as Lord!

Furthermore, the gospel is not only about the person of Christ, **it is about the *history of Christ***.

Religion is about man’s fundamental problem. Man’s fundamental problem is death. Religion, therefore, is any philosophy or belief about death. Can death be overcome? That is the question of the ages.

The “good news” is that Christ died, was buried, and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-12).

It is not good news when someone dies, but in the case of Christ, it is gospel. If he had not truly died, he could not have risen from the dead to demonstrate his victory and power over death. Jesus died. His body was placed in a grave. Over the next few weeks, over 500 witnesses saw him alive. He literally, tangibly, physically, bodily rose from the grave. This is good news! Christ defeated death. And, He solved man’s fundamental problem. If Christ has power over death, He has power to resolve our fundamental problem regarding death. Why go to Mohammed or Buddha? They are still in the grave. Why run to psychologists? They can’t save your soul. Only a living resurrected Christ can impart life.

Not only does the gospel tell us about the person of Christ and his victorious history, it tells us ***the meaning of that history***. When a person dies, their death has little historical significance other than they are deceased. Christ’s death was different. His death thunders with meaning. The

terms “redemption,” “grace,” “propitiation,” and “justification” are a few of the NT words that tell us how the death of Christ is to be interpreted.

Take the word “redemption” for example: His death was redemptive. The word “redemption” (*apolutrosis*) means “to set free” or “to release.” Christ died as a substitute for sinners. Because He paid the penalty for your sins, you can be “set free” from the guilt, shame, and penalty of sin. And, this good new!

THE GLORIOUS EUANGELION OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 4:3, 4 The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The title “glorious gospel” refers to **the intrinsic worth of the message**. It is glorious because it presents the majesty and glory of the Redeemer. Glory is to Christ what a light is to a lamp. Glory is the brilliance and beauty of His person. The glorious gospel reveals the pre-existent Son who shared the glory of the Father and laid aside his radiance, not his deity, to become a man. He was not only a man, He was a humble servant to men (John 17:5; Philippians 2:6ff).

The glorious gospel reveals the hidden glory of Christ disclosed while He was on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1). It displayed the glory of the ascended Christ in his official capacity as sovereign Lord (Revelations 1:12ff). It reveals that when believers receive eternal life (John 3:16), they are given the glory of God to shine in their hearts to change the inner man (2 Corinthians 4:6; John. 17:22). Their bodies will be changed and made like His glorious body at His coming (1 Corinthians. 6:20; 15:51; 1 John 3:2, 3). No wonder it is called a “glorious gospel!”

THE EUANGELION OF THE GRACE OF GOD

Acts 20:24 I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

The title “gospel of grace” describes **the character of the gospel**. It is the gospel of mercy and undeserved kindness.

Two aged saints were sitting in a rest home when a gentleman wandered by and asked them to describe salvation. One replied, “Something for nothing.” “Yes,” replied the other, “but it is even better than that. It is everything for nothing.”

To understand grace you must understand depravity. Man’s depravity makes grace necessary. The sinner is like a leopard that cannot change his spots. Like dandruff, we all have it. Like

sheep with parasites, we must all be dipped and cleansed. Cleansing comes by the blood of Christ. Man cannot save himself, nor can his salvation be bought or earned. Man cannot be bought with silver and gold. The price of redemption is blood. Blood is the currency of the spirit world, and our Lord graciously paid the price so we could be free from the penalty of sin.

The gospel is not about what we need to do for God, but what God has done for us through Christ.

God sent His Son to pay for our sin. It is because He died as our substitute that we can be cleansed and forgiven. Salvation is a gift of grace to believing men.

In Exodus 20:24, right after YHWH gave the Ten Commandments, He described the altar on which Israel was to offer sacrifices to Him. The altar could not be made from cut stones, nor could it have steps ascending up to it. The lesson is clear! Man cannot ascend to God on the basis of his own merit. Man's efforts are not acceptable on God's altar. God planned the sacrifice. And by grace, He has done it all that is necessary for your salvation by offering Christ as your sacrificial Lamb on Calvary's altar.

Harry Ironside was once asked how he could know the truth with so many religions on earth. He responded that there were only two religions: **Do** and **Done**. Which one do we follow?

THE EUANGELION OF YOUR SALVATION

Ephesians 1:13 And you were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

The title "gospel of your salvation" speaks of **the effects of the gospel**. It saves souls from condemnation and judgment. It redeems, justifies, and reconciles one to God (Romans 5:1ff).

It also addresses **the response** required. It is the gospel of your salvation. No man is born a Christian. Even though he may be taught about Christ as a child, there is a point in time when the man must personally receive Christ as his Lord and Savior. Conversion is not a process. Like birth, there is a day of salvation (John 3:3). Prayer does not convert a soul. Faith in Christ saves the man (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Salvation happens when one hears the facts of the gospel and believes the message (Romans 10:17). It is not something one has to earn (Titus 3:5). It is a gift that is received by faith (Acts 20:21). And that gift will not be taken away (Romans 11:29). When one places his faith in (*en*) into (*eis*) or (*epi*) upon Christ, he receives forgiveness of sins. This is good news (Acts 13:38).

Spurgeon use to say, “Never put a question mark where God has put a period.” Have we come to a place in our life where we have placed our faith in Christ, and accepted His work on our behalf? This is personal possession that leads to salvation.

THE EUANGELION OF PEACE

Ephesians 6:15 Stand . . . with your feet shod. . . with the gospel of peace.

Peace is a *fruit of the gospel*. One receives peace with God on the grounds of the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. To appreciate peace one must understand the war. When Henry Thoreau, the naturalist, was near death, a friend asked him, “Henry, have you made peace with God?” His arrogant reply was, “I didn’t know that we had ever quarreled.”

Man’s war with the Creator is just as profound as the CIA’s war with the Colombian drug bosses.

There is peace available in the gospel. But it has to be on God’s terms, not man’s terms. God’s judgment on sin at Calvary makes it possible for Him to extend to men a treaty of peace, but each man, an enemy, must embrace the Son . . . must accept the offer . . . and when he does, he gains peace with God (Psalm 2:12).

Don Richardson brought to life a vivid illustration of this in his book *Peace Child*. Peace could only be attained between warring Sawi Tribes if the head of the tribe would give his son to the enemy to raise. When the son was given, the opposition tribe knew the chief meant business. Each tribe member was required to touch the child. This was their way of confirming a commitment to a *covenant of peace*. If you want peace God, you must touch the Son by faith (Matthew 11:28, 29; John 6:53).

There is, however, a difference between “peace with God,” and possessing the “peace of God.” The first is a fact resting on the finished work of Christ; the second is experienced by faith in the fact.

MY EUANGELION

Romans 2:16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Did you notice the phrase, “my gospel”? The term refers to ***personal ownership of the gospel***. It is not until *God’s gospel* becomes *my gospel* that the world will know of the Savior. We must not only take possession of the gospel for our own salvation, we must embrace it as our life message.

We must come to see ourselves as a steward committed with a sacred trust—a trust we must guard as well as dispense.

Paul termed it “my gospel;” not that he had degraded it by his personal eccentricities or diverted it by selfish appropriation, but the gospel was put into the heart and lifeblood of the man Paul, as a personal trust to be executed by his Pauline traits, to be set aflame and empowered by the fiery energy of his fiery soul. Paul’s sermons — what were they? Where are they? Skeletons, scattered fragments, afloat on the sea of inspiration! But the man Paul, greater than his sermons, lives forever, in full form, feature and stature, with his molding hand on the Church. The preaching is but a voice. The voice in silence dies, the text is forgotten, the sermon fades from memory; the preacher lives. (EM Bounds)

Back in the old days of small business, the word “sons” was stenciled on storefronts: “Fleming & Sons;” “Johnson & Sons;” “Blackwell & Sons.” When sons entered their father’s business and assumed responsibility, they shared the title. Can you say with the apostle Paul that you are “God’s fellow worker” (2 Corinthians 6:1)? Do you have the sense you are in business with Christ? Paul did!

In his book, *Angola Beloved*, T. Earnest Wilson tells of a Chilonda Elder who as a young convert tried for months to tell the elders the gospel story every evening at the camp fire. But night after night the tribal leaders rebuffed him. One night the opportunity came, and he told this story.

There was a drought in the land and all the animals came together to discuss where they could find water. The turtle came forward and said he knew, but the lion cuffed the turtle with his paw and said that he knew a place from which he used to drink as a cub. They all followed the lion, but when they arrived there was no water. But the turtle stepped forward again and said, “I know where there is water.” This time, the elephant rebuked him, and they all followed the elephant to his ancient water hole. But when they arrived it was a cracked dry riverbed. One after another, from the monkey to the rabbit, they all had their turn to try and lead the animals to water. Lastly, the turtle stepped forward and said, “I know where there is water.” Very thirsty, they followed the turtle. He led them to a rock and nearby was an artesian spring.

Sanji ended his illustration with the obvious application: “We have been following you elders for a long time among the dark paths of witchcraft and fear and death and we are thirsty still, but I know where there is living water!”

Sanji told them the gospel story.

The gospel of Christ is living water. Will you drink deeply from the well of the gospel? It is the water of life that can save your soul. Believe the gospel and make it your message.

30. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

*Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about **doing good**, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

Oswald Sanders tells the story of Charles Lamb who was with some friends fantasizing about how they would react if a famous personage from the past were to appear in their presence. “And if Christ entered the room?” queried one. The following insight was offered: “You see if Shakespeare entered we should all rise; if He appeared, we must kneel” (J. O. Sanders, (1952; 1971) *Incomparable Christ*: p. 11).

THE MYSTERIOUS RESPONSES

Some worshiped Him. Others saw Him as a Nazarene, a mere man, the son of Joseph, the carpenter’s son. A few loved Him and were willing to die for Him. His enemies were eager to rid the earth of Him. To them he was a Devil. But, to Thomas He is “Lord” and “God.”

HIS SYMETRY OF CHARACTER

- He neither possessed excess or deficiency.
- He had no outstanding strength or virtue.
- He had no apparent weakness.
- He wasn’t known for one attribute.
- He cast no shadows.
- He never asked for forgiveness, but He forgave others.
- He had no vices, only virtues.
- His strengths never degenerated into weakness.
- He had no deflection.
- He was gentle. Children loved Him. Leaders feared him.

- He was serious, yet never melancholy.
- He spoke of his joy, yet He was a “man of sorrows.”
- He never spoke when He should have been silent.
- He never prevailed at the expense of another.
- He never spoke the truth without love.
- He never loved without truth.
- He had the prudence of a serpent, the simplicity of a dove.
- He possessed the excellences of both sexes.
- He was a man of steel and velvet; of grace and of power.

HIS UNIQUE LIFE

- He never owned a business or made one a success.
- He never wrote a book. His only writing was in sand.
- He never owned property.
- He never wrote a song, yet his teachings are known.
- He never spoke a word that needed to be withdrawn.
- He never spoke a word for which He asked apology.
- He never apologized for an action.
- He was never at a loss for words. Yet, he wasn't a talker.
- He never exhibited fear . . . or pride . . . or jealousy.
- He never complained.
- He was never late, ruffled, or out of character.
- He confessed no sin. Yet, he invited scrutiny.
- He never asked for a pardon.

- He never became discouraged, anxious, or worried.
- He never broke a commandment.
- He never sought the advice of another.
- He was never defensive. Never rude. Never irritable.
- He never asked or permitted prayer for Himself.

SCRIPTURAL ATTESTATIONS OF HIS CHARACTER

- He is called “Holy Offspring” (Luke 1:35).
- He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).
- He committed no sin (1 Peter 2:22).
- No one could convict Him of sin (John 8:46).
- His love surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3: 19).
- He was completely humble.
- He became a servant.
- He was born in the smallest of towns.
- He was born to poor parents.
- He was born in a stable.
- He owned only one valuable cloak.
- He was so poor He had to borrow a penny for an illustration.
- He even had to borrow a donkey.
- He even borrowed a tomb in which to be buried..
- He died on a cross, the cruelest way to die.
- He was meek, but not weak; quiet, but not shy (Matthew 11:29; 2 Corinthians 10:1).
- He was an incessant worker, yet not a workaholic. (John 5:17).

- He was full of grace and virtue, yet not syrupy sweet (John 2)
- He was bold but not brash, humble but not sheepish.
- He was full of justice and godly zeal (John 2).
- He was vulnerable, yet at times he would not trust men.

Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel,"

31. THE RIDER ON THE WHITE HORSE

Revelation 19:11-21

The vision before us is personified by the Rider on a white horse showing us how Christ wages war from His position in heaven. The vision shows us that it is through the gospel and the proclamation of the Word of God that He penetrates society to win souls and to root out evil. Christ will indeed come again, but this is not a picture of the Second Advent. It is an image of Christ coming in history to defeat adversaries through the sword of the gospel. We have seen in previous chapters the defeat of the beast and the destruction of the great harlot. Now we see the means of that defeat and the sure and ultimate destiny of the unholy trio of evil.

Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

The periscope of prophecy has just announced the marriage supper of the Lamb, but what we see are a captain warrior and His mighty army arriving at a battlefield. The warrior can be interpreted in no other way than Christ. He is the One Who intercedes at the right hand God “above” us (Romans 8:34) and sends his Holy Spirit to help with our infirmities “in us” (Romans 8:26-27).

The white horse is not literal. Christ does not come to fight the anti-God forces via the medium of a horse. The white horse is a symbol of conquest, of royalty, of military leadership, of a righteous cause, and of pure virtue.

John identifies the Rider as “Faithful and True” as opposed to fraud and deception which characterized the beast, whore, and the devil. By “faithful” John means that Jesus is dependable. By “true” John means that Jesus is reliability. The idea is that in Christ’s person and work, God is keeping His covenant with men. Ascended to the right hand of God, He acts in history to save his people and to defeat evil.

The word “judge” means “to sever” or “to cut through.” Christ is the Warrior Judge. “He doth judge and make war” informs us that our sweet Jesus is more than a gentle, loving shepherd Savior, but a fierce, military general waging war against the anti-God forces on earth. Jesus is not some ooey gooey butter cake that tolerates the sugar-coated political correctness going on in this age. After Israel was delivered from Egypt, Miriam wrote a song announcing her new insight

into the God that delivered Israel from Pharaoh's army: "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name" (Exodus 15:3).

We tend to think of Jesus as "sugar and spice and everything nice," but our Bible informs He is tougher than marines. Ready to flex his military muscle, Jesus crushes hostiles to the law of God. He commands all men to repent including statesmen, legislators, judges, and presidents. He is at war against deceivers, thieves, abortionists, Sodomites, fraudulent bankers, trickster lawyers, and humanistic social engineers. And, if we are going to follow him, we'd better be ready for mortal conflict and hand-to-hand combat against the anti-God forces of our age.

Revelation 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

This is how we need to see Jesus. The Savior is portrayed as having eyes as a flame of fire. This signifies his piercing knowledge and His intense focus on the mission.

Our Warrior King is not some sugar-coated politician sitting on a cushion of strawberries in an air-conditioned office. He is a seasoned battle commander with dust on his face and grit on his teeth fiercely engaged in the heated battle for hearts and minds.

The crowns on his head are not literal figurines worn on the head. These are symbolic images representing the fact that He has a victor's authority to wage war against evil by virtue of His death, burial, and resurrection. He has achieved nothing but victories against the anti-God forces in history. He is the Victor over Satan, sin, and death. He is the King of creation and King of the new creation (Colossians 1:15-18). He, not Satan, rules the universe. He, not Caesar, must be obeyed. His law, not man's law will prevail. He is on the throne now and Head over all "all rule and authority" (Colossians 2:10).

The fact that He has a name that no man knows indicates his personal depth of character. The riches of Christ are unsearchable. There is much about Christ that is incomprehensible to the mind of man. There are unexplored galaxies yet to be discovered in the universe of Christ. His ministry in heaven, his work of saving souls, and his conquest over evil in history is often invisible. It remains a mystery.

Revelation 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

Having a cloak dipped in blood is not literal of course, but representative of experience in war. Our Lord knows what it is like to have face-to-face, hand-to-hand, nose-to-nose combat with the evil men. Our Savior King is a battle-scarred Veteran of holy conflict. The blood here is not his own, but that of rebels splattered in a hack-and-cut brawl of a battle to the death. His garment is

stained with blood before the battle begins demonstrates that this is apocalyptic imagery, not prose. Reality, not sequence is the issue here. We are dealing with facts, not fiction. Our Lord is the Scorpion Warrior King, and those who serve Him will find themselves engaged in a stinging, bloody combat for the truth of the gospel.

John now erases any ambiguity about the identity of this general. He is none other than the Word of God, the eternal *Logos* made flesh, the Hebrew-Greek answer to all man's questions. Christ is the exact representation of the invisible God, the complete revelation of the will of God, and the supreme reflection of deity in bodily form. To see Him is to see the Father, and to obey Him is to obey the Living Torah (John 1:1, 14; 14:6-10; Colossians 1:15-18; 2:9).

Revelation 19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Christ leads the charge. His army is dressed in white riding upon white horses. The armies of heaven could be angels (Zechariah 14:5; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7), but more than likely the army represents the sum total of Christians who trust Christ and follow him in this life. The strength of the saints is their holiness and devotion to the Savior. His army is not perfect, but they are pure. We are not told what they do or even that they participate in battle—only that they are Holy Ones. Before us is a huge army, a symbol of hope and power and deliverance. We are on the winning side. The saints are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Not because Christians fight the war, but because they rely upon the victories and accomplishments of Another. These are captives who share in the conquest of our Lord and Savior. Believers are not defeated foes, but beneficiaries of His royal accomplishments at the cross (Romans 8:37; Ephesians 4:6ff; Colossians 1:9-14). His gospel will prevail.

The “fine linen, white and clean” represents imputed righteousness, the forensic justification of the saints. Because of their faith in the faithfulness of Christ, the people of God are viewed as holy and righteous in his eyes. This is positional truth. It is idealistic. In reality, we are more like Joshua clothed “in filthy garments” (Zechariah 3:30). Nevertheless, we claim our glorious position in the Beloved by faith. We aspire to be holy and virtuous in our Christian walk. In heaven, we are righteous men; on earth, we are flawed and filthy soldiers learning to be righteous in all that we do.

Revelation 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

His only weapon in this conflict of the ages is not in his hand, but in his mouth-- the Word of God. He does not use the clanking, thundering, banging metal rods of bayonets and muskets to

force the retreat of His enemies. He uses persuasive arguments consistent with the Word of God on the bloody battlefield of public debate. Political adversaries lay like corpses before His gospel offensive. The imagery looks back to Isaiah 11:4 where He shall smite His enemies with the rod of His mouth. It is the power of the gospel rather than the exercise of brute force that achieves victory. Jesus wins souls, not by compulsion, but by persuasion; not by force, but by the faithfulness of his followers; not by coercion, but by the virtue of His people.

By using the terms “iron scepter” and “winepress of the wrath of God,” John informs Jewish readers that Jesus is New Israel’s true messiah, and that He is the One through whom YHWH advances the kingdom of God within the human race. The King wages war and eschatological judgment smites the nation in advance of the dynamic consummation at the end of history.

Enough of man! We pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.” This is a rebel’s prayer. By this, we are not praying for some millennial kingdom but that God’s will be done now, in our time, in our nation, today!! And, the rule of God is extended when hearts surrender to the authority of the King of the nations as their Ruler and Lawgiver. All that is wrong with our age is because global leaders have rejected God’s law and are hell bent on creating their own utopia through man-made legislation—legislation opposed to God’s Law-word. The problem is not “the economy, stupid” but the lack of Theonomy in the hearts of men (Jeremiah 10:7; 32:22; James 4:12).

Here we understand the nature of this battle. This is a spiritual warfare. Christ does not wage war against the forces of evil with guns and tanks, but by proclamation of the gospel! It is through the Word of God that Christ defeats the anti-God forces, wins hearts, and judges men (Hebrews 4:12). He is seen here in the fierce capacity of treading the winepress of the wrath of God squashing the wicked and rooting out evil among men.

As a way of application, the early Christians would have taken courage from this vision to proclaim the gospel to neighbors and friends. This is why Christians involved in political struggles and cultural wars of our age must never stop quoting the Word of God. There is a tendency, in order to be politically correct and not to appear religious, to fail to quote the Bible in the arena of ideas because it irritates humanists. When Christians stop quoting God’s Word, they lay down their swords and experience a loss of power and effectiveness. This does not mean Christian politicians must hammer people with Scripture, but it would be refreshing to hear Christians quote an appropriate verse in critical debates from time-to-time. It is their honor to acknowledge the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father. It is this truth that will defeat the decrepit ideas coming from tenets of atheistic humanism. Christ reigns; not Caesar; Christ rules the affairs of men; not humanistic leaders of this world.

Revelation 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Christ has a secret name that only He knows. The Church knows Him as “faithful and true.” The world knows Him as “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.” If he rose from the dead, he conquered the greatest enemy of all and deserves the title “Lord.” By virtue of His exalted position to the right hand of God, He is our representative, King of kings. There is no potentate whose power exceeds that of Christ. All are responsible to Him and will one day stand before Him in their individual capacities to give account of their stewardship. Take off your crowns! Bow your heads, O kings. Jesus reigns!

According to the German historian, Ethelbert Stauffer, the religious principle of the Roman Empire from the days of Augustus onward was salvation by Caesar: “Salvation is to be found in none other save Augustus, and there is no other name given to men in which they can be saved.” When Peter preached Christ and said about Him, “Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” Peter declared war on Rome. The gospel that “turned the world upside down” in the First century preached another king—King Jesus (Acts 17:6-7).

The gospel is the most wonderful, powerful, fundamental fact of history. The ascended Savior died, rose from the dead, and rules over the affairs of nations to win souls and to defeat evil. Therefore, let this passage expand our views of our Warrior King, in heaven, doing battle against the anti-God forces of our age.

(Note: Futurists understand this section to refer to the second coming of Christ, the Parousia mentioned in 1 Thessalonians four, and the consummation of history. The symbolic view understands this as imagery pertaining to the present risen life of Christ warring on behalf of His people against the anti-God forces. I hold to the symbolic approach for following reasons: (a) the scene is a heavenly vision; (b) the white horse, blazing eyes, robe dipped in blood, and sword out of the mouth are not a literal description of Christ but an illustrative presentation of our Lord’s command from heaven; (c) the warrior is symbolic and not literal; (d) the war is spiritual and not physical; present, not future; synthetic, not analytical; (d) the context of this section is surrounded by iconic imagery, and (e) John’s presentation is written in apocalyptic style, a dramatic literary form suitable for his purpose of revealing the work of Christ in history. This image functions like a political cartoon we see in newspapers—a caricature of actual political events.)

32. THE WOUNDED HEALER

Isaiah 53:5 “*By his stripes we are healed*”

The Basis of Christian Forgiveness

Ever been hurt by the others?

Jesus was hurt . . . except, He didn’t think like a victim.

He turned his injuries into an opportunity to heal those who afflicted Him. Consider the following:

1 Peter 2:24 “**By His wounds you have been healed**” (ESV)

- **On Love:** The Father loves us not because of who we are but because of Who He is—a God of love. Likewise, we love not because of how people perform but because of who we are and what we are becoming—a person of love (1 John 4:10).
- **On Pain:** Christ died that we might live. It is through his eternal and incomprehensible sufferings that we are made whole; that is, He accepted our condemnation that we might experience the consummation of His salvation. He is the **Wounded Healer!** It is through His pain, that we are healed. And, it is through our pain and suffering that we have the capacity to make others whole; that is, a person who is like the Savior—a Wounded Healer.
- **On Betrayal:** If you have never been deeply betrayed, you will have little capacity to empathize with people who have been divorced, or fired, or slandered, or abused. Without the pain of a broken trust, you will become a self-righteous legalist demanding perfection from sick and defective sheep. If you are not a person of principal, you can never be betrayed, you can only betray. Because Jesus is not Lord in the hearts of most Christians, they can only multiply pain. However, if you are a person of integrity, you cannot expect carnal minded men not to betray you. Even the best pastors are sheep bit (Luke 22:47).
- **Propitiation:** On the cross, Christ not only took our sins, but he took the Father’s pain and sorrow that our sins caused the Father. Not only did Christ pay for our sins, He paid for the price of the Father’s offended justice. He not only took our sins, He took the brunt

of the Father's anger and wrath for our sin. Thus, God's justice was fully satisfied . . . and, we know the debt has been paid through blood currency of the spirit world.

- **Hearing pain:** Christ felt the pain in His Father's heart caused by our sin, and He bore that pain on the cross. Demanding forgiveness from an offended (spouse) before the offended been permitted to share their hurt and pain caused by the offense is like asking a man who smashes his thumb with a hammer to be totally silent in his pain. No man can truly understand the wretchedness of his offense until he understands the hurt caused by his actions. Therefore, listen well . . . and listen long. Maturity demands we hear the pain of the ones we hurt in life; that is, do the difficult thing and listen to those you hurt . . . then do all you can to relieve that pain.
- **Forgiving pain:** Christ not only has authority to forgive sins, He forgives the pain our sin caused him on the cross. True forgiveness not only forgives the act, **but the pain it caused!** Forgiveness is costly because the offended has to tap into His spiritual core and give up the right of revenge. When the woman with an issue of blood touched the corners of the Lord's Tallit, Jesus said, "Who touched me, I felt power go out of me . . ." Likewise, to forgive means the forgiver must expend energy and pay the cost of forgiveness.
- **Freedom:** When our Lord forgives, He sets us free to go into the future free from the fear of punishment (I John 4:17). True forgiveness not only forgives a debt, but releases the offender from the victim's anger. Forgiveness releases the offender from one's right to justice so the offender can have a future free from the fear of retaliation.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

- **Grace:** Grace can solve any problem!³ Add grace and wounds heal. Forgiveness is an act of grace, not a right to demand. In a covenant relationship, a serious breach of contract, like adultery, the offender can be released from the contract if the offended will not forgive; that is, the victim of adultery has no duty to the contract in the case of betrayal like adultery. Forgiveness does not mean an offended spouse is obligated to keep his or her end of a contract once the contract is broken. To be forgiven of a blatant betrayal is a privilege and not a right. Justice is a right; the extension of forgiveness is a gift of grace. In such a case, forgiveness can be requested, but if received, should be regarded as a sacred trust. But, there is no grace to the unrepentant for the Scripture places a condition

³ We are speaking relationally, not judicially. Justice is not opposed to grace. Both justice and grace have their place in society; one purges out evil from society; the latter saves souls and transforms men.

on forgiveness: “if he repent, forgive him . . .” (Luke 17:3) – a 3rd class condition with a subjunctive *metanoasa*.

- **Wounded Healer:** Granting forgiveness is an opportunity to be a wounded healer. The offender has the greater need; that is, not only does the offender need forgiveness, the offender needs to repair damage produce by his own lack of integrity. The goal of forgiveness is to repulse the source of unfaithfulness as well as remove the guilt. Grace can not only forgive but it can heal the sinner and make him whole. Only the forgiven can be a wounded healer.

Luke 7:45-47 . . . but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet . . . hath anointed my feet with ointment. . . .Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

- **Integrity:** to be forgiven is an act of grace that must be received with thankfulness. When thankfulness completes its finished work, the offender will grow in integrity; that is, when under pressure, the cords of duty will not snap. To be a person that does not snap under pressure, it to be like Christ—a person of integrity “who swears to His own hurt . . . and is not shaken” (Psalm 15:4-5).
- **Opportunity:** When you become a person of integrity, you can expect to be betrayed and then given the opportunity to be a wounded healer—to “heal others by your stripes.” When you become like Christ, you begin to love because of who you are and what you are becoming—a person of love.

33. MARRED MORE THAN ANY MAN

Isaiah 52:14 . . . his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness . . .

The cross is the most sacred symbol of the church, and yet it is a strange paradox. On one hand, it is the symbol of man's inhumanity to man as the cruelest instrument of death ever conceived in the minds of men. On the other hand, the cross is a symbol of God's love for mankind and the power of salvation.

The cross is a confluence of love and hate, of life and death, of justice and mercy, of heaven and hell. History is centered around it. Theology is built on it. All Christian service must be done in light of it. Wherever men understand the meaning of the cross, civility and charity reign.

Wise men study it; fools ignore it.

THE AGONY OF CRUCIFIXION

The crucifixion was shrouded with intense psychological suffering.

The sheer anticipation of crucifixion would induce shock for most men. Pressed in by the prescience of the cross in the Garden of Gethsemane (meaning: "the oil press"), a vault-like gloom settled over Christ's soul. When a person faces danger epinephrine is released into the blood stream. The heart races. Major arteries dilate. Capillaries constrict, and blood pressure rises. So intense was Christ's agony, that He sweat great drops of blood, a phenomenon known as *hemadrosic* or *blood sweat*. So vivid was the agony of redemption that Jesus almost died on the spot. An angel was sent to strengthen Him. There existed a possibility that Christ's body might not hold up under God's master plan of redemption (Luke 22:43).

The crucifixion was sometimes introduced with a flogging.

Jesus' crucifixion was preceded by a sleepless night where He was forced to stand on his feet on cold stone. This was followed by three mock trials (Sanhedrin, Herod, & Pilate), abuse by slapping, spitting, and punches with a closed fist. In an effort to appease the riotous mob, Pilate ordered Christ flogged. Cicero called it "the intermediate death." For this reason the Jews forbid any flogging beyond 40 lashes. But, the Romans possessed no such restrictions and felt at liberty to beat a man within an inch of his life. The instrument for this torture was the *flagellum*, a short whip with pieces of steel or bone protruding from the ends of leather strap Each blow would cut,

bruise, and rip the epidermis. The sliced subcutaneous tissue on the back made a torso look like shredded wheat. Blood oozed from the capillaries and deep bone bruises stunned the body with excruciating pain.

Additional blows with the hand or reeds would send the crown of two-inch thorns deeper into Christ's scalp. Blood poured down the face of God's silent Lamb.

Crucifixion was preceded by an agonizing death march.

When Roman generals conquered their enemies, they would march their prisoners to Rome. There, the generals would parade the defeated naked through the streets and crucify them as a form of entertainment and as a statement of domination.

Christ's death march was also dreary and humiliating. On His bleeding shoulders was placed the *patibulum*, the 125 pound cross piece which He dragged about 200 yards outside the city. With every step the splintery cross gouged His shoulders and rubbed them raw. Too weak to carry the *patibulum*, a foreigner named Simon was commandeered to help carry the Savior's cross. At the front of the procession a soldier rammed his way through the crowds on the *via delorosa* bearing the *titulus*, a statement of the crime for which He was condemned, "King of the Jews."

Crucifixion was a death by impalation.

In a cold sweat, Jesus arrived at Golgotha, the hill of execution. The victim was usually stripped naked, but in the case of Jews, the indicted was sometimes allowed the dignity of wearing a loincloth. The soldiers tripped Jesus to the ground, back down, and arms still tied to the *patibulum*. Soldiers pinned His arms to the beam with their knees and hands.

Weakened by the scourging, a man had little energy to resist this aggression. As the willing Lamb of God, the Savior offered no resistance. The executioner felt the indentation in the wrist and plunged a six-inch square steel spike through the hand with a single blow. The steel spikes dislocated the carpal bones, but did not break them. The median nerve was touched, but not severed. Lightning like pain flashed across the limbs of his body: "As a sheep before his sheers is dumb, so Jesus opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

With the body anchored to the *patibulum*, four soldiers lifted it into place near the top of the 7-foot stake. Another tidal wave of pain electrified the brain as the spikes held the total weight of the body to the cross. Grabbing the feet, which hung about a foot off the ground, and bending the knees of the victim, the executioner placed the spike in the region of the metatarsal (foot) bones. One swing of the hammer completed the grisly job. Impaled on a stake, crucifixion was accomplished. A slow, painful death stalked its victim.

Crucifixion was a death by starvation and dehydration.

Depending on one's constitution, it took 3 or 4 days to die on a cross. During the ordeal, the damned would receive nothing but a stupefying beverage to dull his senses. Bleeding, sweating, and urinating would deplete the body of precious fluids. The Sun's blistering heat and the body's fever intensified the demand for liquid. Without water, high temperatures shocked the sensitive brain tissues causing the body to wrangle with convulsions.

Crucifixion was a death by exposure.

The technical term for this cause of death is "hypothermia," a condition where the body temperature drops and the vital organs malfunction. During the day, ultraviolet rays of the sun baked the skin creating huge blisters. First and second degree burns welt over the rounded parts of the body. At night chilly breezes numbed the skin and robbed the body of calories needed to maintain the functions of vital organs.

Crucifixion was a death by tetanus poisoning.

White blood cells rush to the punctures and lacerations on the body. Fibrinogen, a coagulant that collects platelets and red and white blood cells, rush to the wounds to form a protective scab over the injury. But the vast wounds of crucifixion rescind the possibility of healing.

Dirt, gravel, and dust invade the exposed tissues. Flies buzz around the stench of blood, sweat, and dirt. A deadly bacteria known as "anaerobic bacillus," a bacteria that lives in the stomach of cows, barnyards, and topsoil, rapidly multiplies in the punctures and cuts of the body. The bacteria release lethal toxins that poison the nerves and other bodily tissues. Tetanus sets in. Gangrene forms. Nerves are damaged and muscles contort with spasms and convulsions. Severe headaches, fever, cramping muscles, and lockjaw seize the victim. The heart races. Pulmonary edema creates a back-up of pressure in the small blood vessels of the lungs, which causes the vessels to leak fluid. Water fills the lungs. Paracarditis, inflammation of the lining of the heart, surrounds the vital organ increasing sharp pain in the chest. Breathing is difficult. Oxygen debt makes impossible demands on the heart and lungs.

Crucifixion was a death by suffocation and asphyxiation.

In order to breath, a man pushed up on the spike through His feet to gasp a breath of air. Pain pierced the metatarsal region of the feet. As His body sank back down and was suspended by the spikes in His wrists, waves of pain shocked the brain. Over and over, the cycle was repeated.

As bacterial armies invade the body, the muscles contort and spasm. When the quadriceps yields to exhaustion and nerve damage, the legs are no longer able to push up for air. The pounding,

poisoned heart ruptures in its race to supply the body with oxygen. Unable to inhale or exhale the lungs fill with carbon dioxide and death creeps in to rob the man of life.

Crucifixion was sometimes a death by crucifracture.

Because it took anywhere between 36 to 90 hours for an impaled victim to die, soldiers could hurry the process along by striking the tibia bone with an ax. A compound fracture rendered the legs of the victim useless and disabled the ability of the crucified to breath. Death was almost instantaneous. The two thieves at the side of Christ died in this manner. However, our Lord did not die by crucifracture, or tetanus poisoning, or by exposure. The Scripture predicted “none of his bones would be broken” (Psalm 34:20).

Jesus was not the only victim of crucifixion. Many a man met his death on a cross. Yet the Scripture says His visage was marred more than any man. How can that be? What did Christ experience on the cross that other victims did not?

With Christ, crucifixion was a death by Divine wrath.

Two types of affliction met the Savior at the cross -- one by man, the other by a holy God. From 9:00 in the morning till 12:00 noon, Jesus suffered at the hands of man. It was during this time frame that the Lord spoke His noble words: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

But at the sixth hour, 12:00 noon, a strange, moribund darkness blanketed the Earth. The Judge of all mankind released the fury of His wrath on the Lamb. For three hours the Sun refused to shine. In Egypt, Diogenes exclaimed that, “Either Deity Himself suffers, or He is sympathizing with one who does.”

At that time, the Judge laid the sins of the world on the shoulders of the Lamb. So complete was this transfer of guilt that the Scripture declares, “He became sin for us . . .” (2 Corinthians 5:21). All that was evil, all that was wicked, and all that offended a holy God was imputed to the body of the Lamb. Like a surge of a thousand mega volts or electricity, Divine wrath jolted every cell in the body of Christ.

Physical death would have been a sweet escape, a coveted exit, but the Savior chose to remain on the cross until redemption was complete. As time stood still, Christ summoned all his strength to live on and feel the anguish and absorb the full brunt of God’s terrifying anger. It was during this period that Christ queried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why indeed? Rejected by man; abandoned by God! Like a widow who loses the love of her life, the solitary Christ pressed on and endured the depression alone.

When people viewed the mangled mass of contorted flesh impaled on the cross, they did not see a man, only a form. Beating their breasts, people fled the scene screaming at the deformity. The ugliness was not the result of a wooden cross, but a propitiated God. For three hours every cell in His torso sizzled with the fires of Divine wrath. Wrath reserved for hell, inflamed Him. In the end, *He was marred more than any man* (Isaiah 52:14).

Thus, the greatest theology ever imagined was born at the cross, a theology of love, a theology of an efficacious substitution. He died for me! He died for you! Because He was a man He could die as your substitute; because He was God, He could die enough! Selah!

With Christ, crucifixion was a death by self-resignation.

Who can comprehend the sufferings of the Savior? At end of His ordeal, He only uttered only two words to describe the totality of His pain, “I thirst” so you and I might have some idea of the trauma He endured. Having completed the work of redemption, He announced, “It is finished.”

Crucifixion is a horrible ordeal. The victim can neither will to die nor will to live. He must wait for death. But with Christ it was different. He did not chose death while the pain of crucifixion hammered His body, nor did he choose to die during the agony of imputation. He said, “I lay down my life for the sheep . . . no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:17ff).

At any time, the Lord could have called a legion of angels to take Him down from the cross. But, He did not summon a single one. He could have remained alive on the cross indefinitely. He was the eternal Logos. But His work was finished, and in order to prove that He is Lord even over death, He surrendered his body to a temporary rule of this feared enemy. He prayed, “Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.”

Amazed that Christ died so quickly, one of the soldiers in a final act of indignation thrust a sword up into the cardiovascular cavity through the pericardium. John said blood and water poured out. Due to the science of forensic medicine, a post mortem report would have revealed that a thick, sluggish, bloody serum filled His chest cavity and that Christ died of shock and constriction of the heart. (Eastman, 1998)

His death, a fact of history, makes the resurrection, therefore, an historical victory over man’s greatest enemy. Three days later, God raised His body from the dead in triumphant victory! Out of this came the Gospel. Christ solved man’s fundamental problem (death)! Redemption complete! Hallelujah!!

In conclusion, Christ was marred for your sins. He was marred more than any man that you might be unmarked by sin in the eyes of the Father. Have you thanked Him lately for what He suffered for you?

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

(As long as I breathe, I will remember the cross)

Source: NT Theology Lecture Notes: “Five Pillars of the Gospel.”

34. ISAAC AS A TYPE OF CHRIST

Genesis 22:2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

I once heard Bill Moyer, a journalist, lead a discussion with five or six college professors on the meaning of Genesis 22. Not one of the panelists really understood the power and beauty of the passage. The group began to psychologize the text and discuss the psychological impact the mock offering must have had upon Isaac. All agreed he was damaged for life and suffered from low self-esteem due to an alleged post traumatic disorder that occurred as a result of Abraham's abuse to his son.

Finally, one person on the panel who was a president of a Bible college spoke up. He seemed bewildered by the idiocy of the discussion, but finally suggested that Abraham offering up Isaac was a picture of God offering His Son on the cross. Everyone looked at him with blank stares . . . and then quickly got back to their psychoanalysis of the passage.

Genesis 22 is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible. And, it is indeed a shadow or type of the Father offering up His Son on Mt. Moriah (Jerusalem) for the sins of the world.

1. Was Isaac the son of Abraham? Jesus was the Son of God (Luke 1:32).
2. Was Isaac the only son of Abram? Jesus was the only, unique Son of God (John 1:8).
3. Just as Abraham loved Isaac, the Father loved His Son. Both were beloved sons (Matthew 3:27; John 10:17)
4. Isaac was the son of Abraham, and Jesus is called a Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1).
5. Was Isaac offered as a burn offering (in type)? The Lord Jesus was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (Matthew 1:22; John 3:16; Hebrews 9:7ff).
6. As Abraham walked three days with his Son to Mt. Moriah (22:8), the Father waked with His Son during his three year journey to the cross (John 24:11, 21).
7. The servants of Abraham stayed behind while Abraham and Isaac walked up the mountain. There was a transaction at the cross that only the Father and the Son could

fully understand. We see at a distance, but the depth of the cross is something only the Father and Son can fully fathom.

8. Just as Isaac carried the fire wood up the mountain, the Son carried the cross (John 19:17).
9. Both were bound on top of the wood: Isaac by cords; Jesus by Roman nails (Philippians 2:8).
10. Both Isaac and Christ consented to the transaction (Colossians 2:6-8).
11. Both events were acts of worship.
12. Abraham carried the knife and the fire, a type of death and destruction. However, the wrath of God (fire) was poured out upon Christ at the cross for the sins of the world.
13. Was the offering of Isaac proof that Abraham loved God; the offering of Christ was proof that the Father loved us (John 3:16; Romans 8:30ff).
14. Just as Abraham did not withhold his Son from God (in type), God did not withhold His Son from the horrors of the cross.
15. The place where Isaac was offered up to God was called “Jehovah-jireh” (The LORD shall provide). Jesus is God’s provision for our sins (Matthew 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24).
16. Though Isaac was killed in intent, but not in reality, Jesus was sacrificed in reality as a gift to the world.
17. As a ram was provided for the sacrifice, and Isaac spared—his sparring became a type of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Both returned to their fathers (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 15:4).
18. Both Isaac and Christ were identified with the sacrificed lamb (John 1:29).
19. Just as God blessed Abraham and his seed for not sparing his son, God has blessed all of Abraham’s spiritual seed with eternal salvation (Galatians 3:3-14; Hebrews 5:9).
20. We know that Isaac and Abraham returned to the servants and to Sarah, but the text doesn’t say that. The last mention of Isaac is in verse 22:9, and the last time the world saw Christ was at Calvary. His disciples saw him after his resurrection, but not the world.

We can only guess and speculate about the profound joy Abraham had for God and his son Isaac after this experience. Abraham must have reflected on this event every day the rest of his life.

Let us never forget what happened at the cross between the Father and the Son! What a Father!
What a Son!

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
the emblem of suffering and shame;
and I love that old cross where the dearest and best
for a world of lost sinners was slain.

Refrain:

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown.

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

(As long as I breathe, I will remember the cross)

35. THE SILENCE OF THE LAMB

*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** (Isaiah 53:6)*

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

Whether or not a living man is required to answer charges made against him by corrupt lawyers, de facto judges, in sham proceedings? Whether silence is an honorable defense in a maritime court that lacks subject matter jurisdiction over a man?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One out of seven men will be arrested and jailed in America. More often than naught, believers are experiencing encounters with police, charged with violations of corporate codes, and falsely charged in some commercial scheme to extract money from the accused. How should a Christian manage his affairs before de facto judges eating from the fruit of the Poisonous Tree?

Consider carefully the silence of Christ!

THE SHAM TRIALS OF CHRIST

On the night before His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ was arrested, taken into custody, and made to stand before three judges, in three different jurisdictions, in three ad hoc courts: Before the Sanhedrin (Midnight to 6:00 A.M.), before King Herod (7:00-8:00 A.M.), and before Governor Pilate (8:00-9:00 A.M.). In all three courts, the verdict of “guilty” was predictable.

AT THE COURT OF THE SANHEDRIN

At midnight our Lord was arraigned before the Sanhedrin. What? At midnight? Such judicial proceedings were prohibited by Jewish law. Priests and scribes and judges and Pharisees and Sadducees were awakened in their sleep and summoned to the house of Caiaphas for an all-night inquest. Witnesses stumbled half-asleep into the chaotic forum struggling to grasp the controversy and unprecedented nature of the criminal proceedings.

With no witnesses allowed in his favor, Jesus stood on his feet and was forced to listen to false charges and contradicting testimony.

“But, Jesus kept silent” (Matthew 26:63). To speak or answer would have given the unlawful assembly legitimacy and jurisdiction over the alleged defendant.

Exasperated, the presiding judge, Caiaphas, Bet Shammai, the chief priest issued an order: “I adjure you by the living God.” “Tell us,” he demanded, “Are you the Christ the Son of God?”

Placed under oath, Jesus had a duty to testify . . . even though he knew his testimony would be used against him. Silence is a form of speech . . . and silence, under oath can be “tacit acquiescence” or “agreement through silence.” It could have been taken as a withdrawal of his claim that He was indeed the Son of God. Jesus answered in the affirmative adding that he would soon be in the heavens sitting at the right hand of God as judge of all men as affirmed by Daniel the prophet (Matthew 26:64; Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:27-30).

“Blasphemy” shouted the judge as he ripped his judicial robes!!

“He deserves death,” announced the jury!!

This was a claim without proof of claim as required by the rules of evidence. No witnesses appeared to confirm or deny Jesus’s testimony.

Jesus remained silent: “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 opened not his mouth.”

Even in the United States, our government recognizes the right to remain silent:

*Miranda Rights: You have the **right to remain silent**. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the **right** to an attorney.*

But, these rights were quashed before this tribunal.

AT HEROD’S COURT

While under Rome’s jurisdiction, the Jews did not have authority to issue a sentence involving capital punishment. So, they devised a plan to involve Rome.

With the Sun beginning to peak over the Mt. of Olives, the temple police escorted Jesus to Pilate, Governor of Judea, who was in Jerusalem at Fortress Antonio for Passover festivities.

When Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean, he remanded Jesus to the venue of King Herod who had jurisdiction over Galilee (Luke 23:8-12); that is, he postponed Rome’s disposition until Herod ruled on the case.

King Herod formalized an executive hearing and began questioning the accused.

Jesus “**answered him nothing.**”

Herod did not have jurisdiction over Jesus because our Lord was a free man in the original jurisdiction of Genesis 1:26-28; because he had no authority over Christ who has “power (*exousia*) over all flesh” (John 17:2); and, because Herod lacked subject matter jurisdiction over the non-case. Since Jesus had not injured any man nor damaged any property, there was no common law violation. No law broken, no case to try! No contract, no jurisdiction.

With no controversy, Herod was obligated to dismiss the case. But, he did not.

Instead he abused the powers of his office and punished Christ for crimes the court did not identify. Without evidence or proof of claim, he punished our Lord. Without probable cause, Herod and his bailiff-soldiers committed barratry and contempt of court by flogging God’s Lamb (Luke 23:11).

Jesus exercised his right to remain silent. To speak would have given Herod jurisdiction over him. Even to look at Herod would have given him a grant of authority. Our Lord not only remained silent, he stared down at the pavement.

So convinced were the founders about the right to remain silent, they memorialized it in the Constitution. The Fifth Amendment states that “[n]o person...shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself.”

AT GOVERNOR PILATE’S COURT

Having failed to establish subject matter jurisdiction, Herod shuffled the bruised and bleeding Christ back to Fortress Antonio to appear before Governor Pilate and his Roman court.

The Sanhedrin had charged Jesus with “blasphemy” earlier that morning, but illegally amended their charges when they reappeared before Governor Pilate.

The plaintiffs charged our Lord with tax evasion and for being a tax protestor:

“We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a King!”

Talk about dropping a bombshell! Kapow!!

Nothing could have been more politically charged than a challenge to the authority of Caesar. This was their strategy—to inflame the patriotic passions of Pilate. They accused Jesus of treason for equivocating about whether or not one should pay taxes to Caesar.

Further, by testifying that Jesus was a king, they intended to prejudice Jesus as a revolutionary guilty of subversive plots to overthrow Rome! (Luke 23:1-2ff).

Few things are more loathsome than a charge of tax evasion or being labeled a tax protestor. Even today, the accusation ignites patriotic fury even among Tea-Party Americans. It seems so treasonous, doesn't it?

Under these false, embittered charges, **Jesus remained silent.**

Most of us would have leaped out of our seat like madmen shouting, “Liar,” or “Objection, facts not in evidence!!”

In this Roman court possessing authority of capital punishment, Jesus exercised His right to **be silent: “He did not answer”** and “He **did not answer** him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was amazed” (Matthew 27:12-14, John 19:9).

The proceedings should have been dismissed with prejudice, but *ex parte* political pressure from the gallery was applied to Governor Pilate presiding as judge in the hearing.

The charge that Jesus was a tax protestor was not well received by the court because the Roman magistrate knew that all Jews objected to Roman tax levied on them; that the charge was political and subjective, not factual or actual!

But, the charge that Jesus claimed to be some kind of King raised a political question that Pilate wanted answered: “Art thou the King of the Jews?” That is, are you claiming to be some kind of revolutionary general in an effort to overthrow Rome?

In lawyer-like fashion, Jesus answered Pilate's question with a question, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?”

Why did Jesus cross-examine Pilate's question?

Jesus did not ask the question because He did not know the answer.

He asked the question to give Pilate a chance to clarify in his own mind the source and nature of his own query. Did the question come from the prosecution or the court? Courts are required to be fair and impartial. Was Pilate's question a legal, judicial one departing from the duty of

impartiality and a practice of law from the bench, or was it a side bar—a political question that Pilate wanted answered to save his career?

We learn from Jesus' question the source was Pilate and not the plaintiffs, and the nature of the question was political, not judicial.

Jesus answered the political question: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. . . ." (John 18:36-37).

Pilate learned that Jesus affirmed his claim to be king, but that His Source of authority was mysteriously connected to heaven and not earth. Pilate correctly perceived that Jesus was not an immediate political threat to Rome.

Pilate exposed his self-deception and lack of political perception when he asked Jesus with commanding authority, "Do you not know that I have power to crucify you, and have power to release you?"

Jesus corrected the cuffed governor saying, "You could have no power (authority) *at all* against me, except it were given you from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee has the greater sin."

Our Lord challenged Pilate by informing him that *this matter was out of his hands*; that *he did not have the power or principle to resist the mob as he thought he had*.

He went back out to the gallery and declared his verdict, "I find no fault in the man." But, political pressure from the jeering mob threatened the peace. Pilate disregarded his conscience, and the rest is history.

Paul labeled Christ's demeanor at these trials the "**good confession**;" i.e., **Jesus' silence** before these de facto judges and lawless proceedings was the perfect legal strategy on this day in history—a strategy we may need to exercise on occasion (1 Timothy 6:13).

The only way to prevent the government from introducing evidence at trial in regards to your silence is to explicitly invoke your right to remain silent. Without being warned by the police or advised by a lawyer, and without even the benefit of the familiar *Miranda* warnings, you must assert your rights and say, "I invoke my privilege against self-incrimination." "Never, never, never talk to a cop," says Regent Law Professor James Duane (utube).⁴

⁴ Why you should never talk to a cop - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-7o9xYp7eE>

Christ was as a lamb going to the slaughter . . . but not in men's tribunals.

From before the foundation of the world, the Lamb of God was summoned into the Court of the Ancient of Days to discharge a debt on this day, to pay the redemption price for the freedom of men held captive in the dominion of darkness—blood, precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—blood, the precious currency of the spirit world (1 Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 9:22; Colossians 1:13-14). Amen!

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

(As long as I breathe, I will remember the cross)

36. THE DIETY OF CHRIST

Jesus' Equality with God

(Unedited Lecture Notes)

HIS ARGUMENT FROM JOHN FIVE

EQUAL WITH GOD

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:17-27).

EQUAL IN ABILITY

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19).

EQUAL IN KNOWLEDGE

For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. (John 5:20).

EQUAL IN REGENERATION

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will (John 5:21).

EQUAL IN JUDGMENT

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (John 5:22).

EQUAL IN HONOR

That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him (John 5:23).

EQUAL IN RESURRECTION POWER

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live (John 5:24).

EQUAL IN SELF-EXISTENCE

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself (John 5:26).

EQUAL IN AUTHORITY

And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man (John 5:27).

HIS ARGUMENT FROM JOHN 14:6

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6).

le,gei aurtw/| îo`Ð Vİhsou/j(VEgw, eivmi h` o`do.j kai. h` avlh,qeia kai. h` zwh,\ ouvdei.j e;rcetai pro.j to.n pate,ra eiv mh. diV evmou/Å

Jesus said he came from God; that He was going back to God; that He was the way to God. The words “way,” “truth,” and the “life” are articular nouns indicating something very particular and narrow.

HIS ARGUMENT FROM JOHN 8:56

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:56).

The words “I AM” (evgw. eivmi,) is the Greek title for the Tetragrammaton. In Exodus 3:2 and 13-15, we see God’s covenant name is “I Am.” It is spelled “YHWH.” In the Middle Ages the German scribes put in vowels and came up with *Jehovah*. The Masoretic scribes left it as it was.

Here is how YHWH looks with vowels: YaHoWaH. In Jewish tradition, the Jews do not pronounce the name in public. As a substitute they use the title “Adonai” which means *Lord*. *As far as we know, the Apostles never called “Jesus” by his Hebrew name; rather, they the New Testament only records the Greek equivalent, Vhsou in Greek, “Jesus” in English.*

English translators used CAPS: “LORD” for YHWH and lower case “Lord” for Adonai.

In the LXX: *Kurios* is substituted for YHWH (Lord for YHWH).

In the Greek speaking Mediterranean world, they spoke of YHWH as *Kurios*.

To a Jew, *YHWH* or *Adonai* or *Kurios* was the only *Elohim* (the general designation for God). To a Canaanite, Baal was *Elohim*. *Kurios* is translated YHWH in the LXX, not *Elohim*.

When Jesus said, “ego eimi,” He used the emphatic form “I am!” So identical was the Greek phrase with YHWH that the Jews were going to stone Him for capital blasphemy.

HIS ARGUMENT FROM JOHN 10:30-31

John 10:30-33 I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

By this statement, the Jews interpreted it as a claim to deity and were seeking a way to stone Him. Did they come to the correct conclusion? The word “one” is the Greek word “ev.” It is neuter implying that *Christ is one in substance with the Father, and that he is not referring to oneness in personality*. How did the Jews reason?

Major premise: I and the Father are one!

Minor premise: Jesus is one in substance with the Father.

Conclusion: Jesus is Divine.

Major premise: Blasphemers must be stoned to death.

Minor premise: Jesus is a blasphemer

Conclusion: Jesus must be put to death.

The reasoning was logical, but the second minor premise was wrong. They were going to stone him, not for what he did, but for what he said. Later, Jesus said that the Father was greater than He (John 14:28). By this, Jesus was referring to status and position in the Godhead, not attributes and ability. Christology is always subordinate to Theology.

ARGUMENT FROM PAUL

Colossians 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

^{GNT} Colossians 2:9 o(ti evn auvtw/| katoikei/ pa/n to. plh,rwma th/j qeo,thto j swmatikw/j{

Which of us besides a nuclear scientist truly understands the mega tons of power locked in an atom? Split a single atom and there is a nuclear explosion that could level New York City.

Likewise, our text expounds a great truth regarding explosive power compacted in the Savior—that in Christ dwells all the fullness of Deity. Jesus had a body. Inside that small mass of blood and flesh was the Divine nature, **the divine essence**. But, our Lord was more than this. **The fullness** of the Divine nature was in Him. But, there is more: **All** the fullness of the Divine nature was in him.

The text is not telling us that Jesus was like God or that Jesus had a spark of Divinity with him or that He shared a few of God's transitive attributes. The text is engorged with cosmic power. "All," that is, everything, the whole universe of what God is in Christ. The whole "lock, stock, and barrel" of the essence of Deity dwells in bodily form; the "whole shebang" of the nature of the Godhead is in Jesus' humanity. Christ was totally man, but He was also totally God![\[1\]](#) To see Me is to see the Father announced the Lord to Philip (John 14:9).

The word "Godhead" (*theotatos*) does not refer to Divine attributes as does the term "Godhead" (*theiotes*) in Romans 1:20. Rather, it refers to the essence of what it means to be God. In Christ dwelt the core, the kernel, the substance of Divinity. God is spirit and that spirit was in Christ. A good man may manifest a Divine attribute like kindness or mercy, but no man can say that in him dwells the *theotatos*, the very essence of the Divine nature. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of man," declared John.

The term "fullness" is a naval term referring to a full crew on a ship; that is, a fully equipped vessel. The use of the noun "fullness" informs us that Christ was fully God. We sometimes say jokingly about an inept person that they are a few cards short of a full deck or one egg short of a dozen. But, not so with Jesus! Whatever it means to have the essence of God, Jesus had the full

deck. Paul is not saying all of God was in Jesus, but he is saying that the true and full essence of God's unique nature was in Jesus in bodily form.

In Christ, the infinite was in the finite; the eternal in the temporal; the spiritual in the physical; Deity in humanity. All the intransitive attributes of the Divine nature made their home in Christ. Is the Father omniscient? So is Christ! Is God omnipotent? So is Christ! Is God omnipresent? Somehow, somehow Christ shared the Divine nature. The knowledge and the power and the presence that created the Earth, the moon, the Sun, the Milky Way, and the billions of spiral galaxies and global clusters was in Christ, on Earth, in bodily form.

Our thoughts of Jesus are too small! We have too much self-esteem and not enough Christ-esteem. Jesus is more than a good teacher, more than a prophet, He is fully God and fully man. Think more of Jesus! His name is "Wonderful!" He deserves honor, but more than honor. He deserves worship^[2]—for "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Need completeness? Come to Christ! Let us never use His name in vain and let us never be ashamed to be called a "Christian" for in the Lord Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form (Stockton, D302, Think More of Jesus).

MORE EVIDENCE OF CHRIST'S DEITY

He speaks of "His angels" (auvtou), that is, the angels of him (Matthew 13:41; 16:27; 24:31; Mark 13:32).

He speaks of heaven come to earth, that is, as one who was in heaven and is now on Earth (See the three parables in John 3:31).

He speaks from his own authority. He never said, "Thus saith the Lord." Rather, He used the phrase, "But I say unto you . . ." (Matthew 5:22). It is used seven times in the sermon. Notice his authority in this title: ". . . the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8).

By the fact He received worship (John 20:21; Matthew 28:9). When onlookers saw the miracles of Paul and Barnabus and sought to worship them, they ripped their clothes and asserted their mortal humanity (Acts 14:13-14). Jesus did nothing of the kind. He accepted worship. He was either an egomaniac or truly the Son of God.

By the fact Christ demanded faith in Himself as God directed men to place their faith in Him (John 14:1; Matthew 10:32). Jesus said, "Believe in me." The word "God" and "me" are an accusative receiving the action of the word "believe." However, "me" is in the emphatic position placing a slight emphasis on the fact that a person must not only believe in God, but believe upon JESUS!

By his eternal promises (Matthew 28:19, 20). Who could be with the disciples forever but the Lord Jesus Christ?

By the fact he is the icon of the unseen God in Colossians 1:15; i.e., He is the true representation of the true God; the physical manifestation of the invisible God; the historical appearance of the eternal God; the Creator in flesh.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT HIM REFLECT HIS DEITY

John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

A “word” is a verbal representation of a concrete concept or thing. By calling Jesus “the logos,” John is communicating that Jesus is the representation of God. Because the predicate comes first (emphatic position), the emphasis is on full deity. Moreover, the Greeks saw *logos* as the first principle of all things. So, in using the term *logos*, John incorporated all of Hebrew theology and Greek philosophy of *logos* into this title.

Thomas: “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Arians interpreted Thomas statement as an exclamation, “Oh, my lord! Oh, my god!” But, this is not an exclamation. It is a truth assertion derived from synthetic evidence that Jesus was alive. If Jesus truly rose from the dead, then He is God and He is Lord. Thomas was not a simpleton, but an empiricist; i.e. he demanded legal evidence with strict proof claim for such extreme claims coming to him by his brethren. Thomas touched. Thomas saw. Thomas heard. And, the Thomas believed that Jesus was truly God, truly LORD!

Paul: In Colossians 2:15, Paul says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God (o(j evstin eivkw.n tou/ qeou/ tou/ avora,tou). Jesus is called “the image” of God. The word “image” (eivkw.n, ikon) means “representation” and was used to describe Caesar’s image on coins (Matthew 22:20). The word *eivkw.n* is an anarthrous noun indicating the quality of the substantive; that is, that Jesus is the exact representation of the invisible God.

Jesus is also called the “firstborn” (Colossians 1:15). By using the term *Firstborn*, Paul is referring to Jesus’ pre-eminence (Exodus 4:22), not a “birth” or “creation” or “beginning.” Jesus has existed from “everlasting to everlasting” (Micah 5:2). Furthermore, the created order is attributed to Jesus making Him the Creator (Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1:1). Furthermore, Paul went on to say that all the “fullness” dwells in Him. But, what does Paul mean by “fullness?” In the next chapter (Colossians 2:9), Paul says He is all the fullness of deity (pa/n to. plh,rwma th/j qeo,thtoj). “Of deity” (th/j qeo,thtoj) is in the genitive meaning that the “fullness” has its source

in that which exclusively belongs to God. Paul is not saying that Jesus has a few divine qualities, but that all of the virtues and attributes which we associate with God “dwell” (fill the house) in glorified humanity. Because of this fact, all that Christians need for meaning and fulfillment are found in the risen Christ (Colossians 2:10).

In Titus 2:13, Paul says, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ (*tvvhs dozhs tou megalou Qeou kai swthros hmwn Ihsou Xristou.*)” We look for that blessed hope of the glory of the great God and Savior of us Jesus Christ. “Theos” is preceded by a definite article implying that the Savior of us is also deity.

Peter: And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). By this, Peter meant that Jesus was the Messiah as He understood Jewish theology. Notice how he links the term “Christ” with the title “Son of God.” There is only one living God in Jewish theology and Jesus is His Son!

The Author of Hebrews: In Hebrews 1:2-3 we see this statement about Christ, “Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power . . .” The phrase “brightness of glory” refers to YHWH’s shekinah glory, the dwelling glory, between the cherubims. The risen, glorified Christ has been invested with the radiance of Divine beauty. Jesus is called the “express image of his person.” The word “image” (*carakth.r*) means “full expression” or “exact likeness.” Jesus is said to be the “exact image of His person” (*carakth.r th/j u`posta,sewj autou/*). The word “person” comes from the Greek word *th/j u`posta,sewj* (*hupostasis*) which means “foundation” or the *fundamental substance* of a thing or a title deed representing ownership of a thing. The NASB properly translates this word “nature.” Is God a personal, infinite Spirit? Likewise, Jesus has all the attributes we associate with deity. In Hebrews 1:8, Jesus is directly called “God.”

Hebrews 1:8 But unto the Son (pros de ton uion) he saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.'

In Psalm 45:6, Elohim is addressed: “thy throne” is possessive, that is, it is God’s throne. In Hebrews *pros de ton uion* is addressed toward the Son, *son* (*uion*) is in the accusative, the objective of address. The question is in reference to the term “O God.” Is it vocative? Does it express “your throne, o God, is forever and ever.” or, should the passage be interpreted as a nominative; i.e., “God is your throne for ever and ever?” Personally, the former makes more sense.

In his letter known as 1 John, the apostle seeks to weed out the false from the true. He wants his readers to know how to tell who truly knows God and who is lying about knowing God. One of tests of fellowship is the confession in 1 John 4:1-6. The Gnostics could not reconcile good and

evil in the flesh and denied that the Christ was actually present on earth in human flesh. John informs his readers that confessing that Christ was truly human was an essential matter of the faith. The first heresy was not denying Jesus' deity, but denying his humanity! John assumes the deity of Christ and was fighting for the fact that he "touched" and "beheld" the physical form of Christ during his youth (1 John 1:1-3). Using rules of evidence in Roman law, John testifies he saw, touched, and beheld the living, risen Christ! The penalty for perjury was death in a Roman court. John accepted the risk.

In His Book of Revelation, John portrays Christ as the "King of kings, and Lord of lords." John shows us the present risen life of Christ and what He is doing to advance the will of God in history. In Revelation 1:5, Jesus is introduced as "the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth," "the Son of Man" (Revelation 1:13). Next John shows us Christ robed in his High Priestly garments exercising his ministry as part of his highly exalted life. He is the transcendent mysterious messianic figure in Daniel seven coming before the Ancient of Days. Christ is seen in his official, Messianic, priestly apparel. He is not passively administrating the affairs of the Kingdom, but active in judging the church and advancing the gospel through his people in a hostile world.

CHRIST'S WORKS REFLECT HIS DEITY

One has to ask, "If God were to come to earth and become a man, what would you expect him to do to prove it?"

- Would you expect Him to cure disease? Christ healed the blind, the lame, and the deaf?
- Would you expect Him to defeat death and to solve man's fundamental problem? Christ raised three people from the dead before His own resurrection.
- Would you expect Him to exert power over nature? Christ calmed the storm and the sea and multiplied the fish and loaves.
- Would you expect Him to reveal some great words and insights into the perplexing issues of life? Christ was the greatest moral teacher who ever lived.
- Would you expect him to pronounce great moral judgments? Christ forgave men, and announced judgments (Matthew 24).

In every way, Christ did what one would expect God to do?

If Christ rose from the dead, then He is God! Follow Him!

Conclusion: Christ is the unique Son of God. His visitation to Earth was a divine visitation. Christ's gospel is unique. He does not claim to be *a way* but *the only way* to the Father (John 14:6). He did not even say that Christianity was the way to God. He is the way. Salvation is in no other (Acts 4:12). Salvation is only through Jesus Christ. Those who fail to accept Him as Lord

and Savior will perish and will not enter into the Kingdom of God (John 3:36). A correct gospel must include preaching and teaching on the person of Christ, the first pillar of the gospel.

[1] In emphasizing the Deity of Christ it is important to note that He was fully God, but not all of God was in Christ; that is, the Father remains distinct from the Son.

[2] Worship has many meanings and applications, but the fundamental meaning of worship is to “bow the knee,” to acknowledge His authority, and to arrange one’s self under His government and instructions (See Psalm 97). Under this definition worship means coming to hear God’s law and be instructed by it. A great listener is a great worshipper.

37. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Matthew 28:18-20

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

Whether or not the authority of Christ has legal effect and superior claim to the assertions of de facto officers working for Leviathan corporations or whether they are mute before tyrants in positions of political power.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Proud and pompous men intoxicated with power are entering the dominions of Christ disturbing His peace.

The State exercises little restraint in using coercion, intimidation, and threats to impose their will upon free men. Overlapping of State and Federal jurisdictions leaves little room for free men to wiggle.

Use of force by the police state and their kidnapping people through their ultra vires acts for commercial gain has reached epidemic proportions.

With new laws destroying freedom and controlling every facet of a man's life, no criminal left behind casts a dark shadow over the hope of every man.

“Police have shot and killed Americans of all ages—many of them unarmed—for standing a certain way, or moving a certain way, or holding something—anything—that police could misinterpret to be a gun, or igniting some trigger-centric fear in a police officer's mind that has nothing to do with an actual threat to their safety.

In recent years, Americans have been killed by police merely for standing in a “shooting stance,” holding a cell phone, behaving oddly and holding a baseball bat, opening the front door, running in an aggressive manner holding a tree branch, crawling around naked, hunching over in a defensive posture, wearing dark pants and a basketball jersey, driving while deaf, being homeless, brandishing a shoehorn, holding a garden hose, and peeing

outdoors.” (John Whitehead, “If the Police Don’t Have to Protect You What Good are They?”)

Feeding at the public trough, Christians appear to have retreated to the compound of personal piety to practice Christianity within the confines of their own mind. Fearful of offending public officials, many Christians are applying a strategy of subservience – *the total compliance of the total man to total government.*

AN AMAZING VICTORY

I know a man. I will call him, “Bob.” Bob was pulled over by United States marshals, who immediately began to query him. Bob, asked them, “By what authority are you detaining me and demanding information?” For this, Bob was jailed on a Friday afternoon. He was livid.

On Monday morning they brought him in shackles before three different judges. Bob, stood up to each one and said, “By what authority did you arrest me and deprive me of my freedom? Unless you authority is greater than the Lord Jesus Christ on Who’s business I am engaged, I demand you release me immediately.” He then said to the Bailiff, “Bailiff, arrest that man (a federal judge).” That judge left the courtroom and another judge entered. He repeated his question and that judge left the courtroom. After he made the statement to the third judge, the third judge said, “Bailiff, release that man.” This is a true story that happened circa 2008.

PART I

HIS AUTHORITY

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying:

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:18-19).*

Oh, to hear these words for the first time!

Can you hear their thundering strength and roaring power?

They open up new vistas of capabilities and possibilities, of greatness and happiness, of peace and security, of a world made wholly Christian under the invincible and irrefutable dominions of Christ.

Under the spell of His claims and proof of claim by virtue of His resurrected life feeble hearts are made strong, weak knees are fused with strength, and fearful souls are injected with purpose and

renewed confidence to proclaim the Lordship of Christ to wayward sinners and political madmen hell-bent on turning the world over to the cults of chaos.

He does not leave his amazed disciples with a vision of freedom, or love, or comfort, but with a vision of his universal Sovereignty.

In one swell swoop, Christ claims jurisdiction over all men, all families, all nations, all churches, all governments, and all human institutions. Peace and good will to men do not come through despots and crushing dictatorships that wield their swords of power on the battlefield of history, but through the risen Christ made Lord by virtue of His humiliation on earth and His accomplishments at Calvary.

His claim of authority bursts on the scene crushing all the pridefulness of men claiming superior wisdom and power over the masses. His declaration claims authority over kings and princes, politicians and legislators, judges and governors, and mayors and CEO's of corporations.

There is no separation of church and state in His dominions; no divide between the secular and the sacred. He claims jurisdiction over the whole universe—nations and families, science and education, cities and neighborhoods, law and politics, work and business, government and church.

And, he claims jurisdiction over me and my thoughts and my mind and my purpose and my body and my ethics and my time. He is the King of the ages, the Ruler of the past, present, and future; the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is sovereign over life and death, people and processes, weather and the uncertainty of nature.

Can you see him in possession of that authority untangling the wretched wrongs of the past, controlling current events, securing the future for His glory and His honor while bringing men and women under the blessings of His gospel? Can you see him overruling their confusion and weaving the lose threads of your life into a garment of praise while binding all things to His will in His dominions?

DEFINITION

The word “power” in our Greek text is the word *exousia* which refers to the authority⁵ of Christ and the command He exercises over atoms and galaxies, cells and bodies, man and governments. It refers to the competence and mastery of Christ over all disciplines.

⁵ The word “authority” comes from the Old English word “auctor” from which we get the word “author.” It literally means “originator” or “promoter.” All true law comes from the One and Only Lawgiver (James 4:12).

The word authority is derived from the Latin word *auctoritas*. It refers to the power of an officer to enforce His will and His law upon his subjects. Authority implies a warrant to act. As a noun it refers to the power to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience to those under one's authority. While power implies the ability to create and influence a thing, authority is a claim of a right to hold office as opposed to *de facto power and authority commonly exercised by impostors in office today*.

Moreover, every authority is limited by God's Word or man's commission. Even God's law must be exercised with justice and mercy and common sense. No man has jurisdiction over everything. Congress cannot create duties for American citizens. They can only control those under their authority, namely government workers. The President is restrained by the Constitution. He is not Commander and Chief of the American people; rather, he is Commander and Chief of the armed forces. The People are under the authority of the Lord God as expressed in the common law (Amendment VII).

OATH

America, though it has departed from original principles, was built on human sovereignty and freedom.

Our nation's leaders are bound by oath to uphold and support the Constitution; no other rules or codes withstanding; that is, in exchange for public trust, we make officers of the government take an oath and post bond as evidence of their sincerity before assuming the powers of office. Because of the danger of overstepping authority, we seek to bind flawed men down with chains of the Constitution to their duties and to their jurisdiction.

Likewise, our Lord's office was confirmed by oath. So important was His duties, that the Father chiseled it in stone:

"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath . . . the Lord sware . . . 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec'" (Hebrews 6:17-21).

Contempt for God's priest was a capital crime.

"Anyone who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the LORD your God is to be put to death. You must purge the evil from Israel" (Deuteronomy 17:12).

Unlike today's political officers who exercise authority for short durations of time, our Lord's commission as King and Priest is eternal by virtue of an immutable oath. Likewise, contempt for Christ will result in eternal death (John 3:36).

MATTHEW 4:17

Jesus begins his ministry preaching the dynamic invasion of the Kingdom of God into history, the rule and reign of God, claiming jurisdiction over Israel and offering proof of claim by healing disease, multiplying loaves and fishes, and commanding storms. It was a dynamic time and the violent stormed its gates and took it by force (Matthew 11:12).

MARK 1:15, 22-28

Mark introduces us to a Christ teaching men about the arrival of the Kingdom of God and exercising authority pursuant thereof.

Imposing His will upon unclean spirits terrorizing the souls and bodies of men, they flee like dogs caught raiding a backyard dumpster. It was new teaching with authority—not mere theory and propositions, but with effect pursuant to claims of a Sovereign among them. “And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had **authority**, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22).

MARK 1:34-37

Imagine the scene! The whole city gathered at the door of Simon to be healed of some malady by Jesus . . . and, he healed them all. Early the next morning, Peter search for Jesus because more and more people were at his door. He found him praying. The Lord said let us leave (all these sick folks) and go to the next town that I may preach there also. Think of it. He left all those needy people to go preach; that is, His kingdom message was more important than the health of a whole town. Over the next few chapters we learn what his message is and begin to learn the importance of it.

MARK 2:1FF

In this chapter we begin to see the truth(s) that are more important than meeting the physical needs of people. Four men lower a paralyzed man down from the rafters in the courtyard right in front of Jesus' pulpit. Amazing! Notice what Jesus saw. He saw the faith of the four men, and He saw a sinner (the paralytic) that needed forgiveness.

In other words, sin in this man's heart was a greater problem than his paralysis of the body. By His authority Jesus granted the man forgiveness and then provided proof of claim with strict

proof of claim by restoring the man's ability to walk. Thus, we learn a kingdom priority: man's greatest need today is not more money, more self-esteem, and more stuff, but forgiveness of his personal sins.

Immediately, the civil rulers (Pharisees) reacted because only "God" can forgive sins. Jesus perceived their intellectual difficulty and announced that He would heal the man of his paralysis so they could know that that the "Son of Man has power (authority) on earth to forgive sins." That is, it is more important that men understand the authority of Christ to forgive sins than to find medical cures for man's diseases.

Forgiveness is not in Judaism or Islam or some religion. It is not in the Baptist church or Methodist Church. Only One has authority to cancel debt and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Seeing and grasping the significance of the authority of Christ and our need for forgiveness through Him and Him alone is far more important than the healing of an entire cancer ward.

MARK 11:15-33

During Passover Week circa 32 A.D. our Lord entered the temple complex driving out bankers and holy hucksters claiming jurisdiction over all matters related to His Father's House. Shocked and aghast at our Lord's command, lawyers encircled Jesus and asked Him, perhaps, the most important question of all time, "By what authority are you doing these things?"

Our Lord offered them a contract (a conditional acceptance): I'll tell you by what authority I drove out the banksters from the temple if you tell me by what authority John the Baptist performed his ministry: "Was it from heaven or from men?" They were trapped.

If they said, "From Heaven," then they condemned themselves because they did not submit to John's call for repentance and a consequent baptism as proof of sincerity; if they said from men, the crowds would have stormed the temple and thrown the imposters out of office. Our Lord was not compelled to fulfill his end of the contract because of a breach of faith by the priestly party.

JOHN 17:2

As thou hast given him power (authority) over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

We are familiar with authority in cubical jurisdictions—the authority of a teacher or bank teller or parent or boss. Christ claims universal authority over all flesh and the power to give "eternal life" to those He chooses. He claims absolute ownership over all mankind as if a beneficiary of a huge estate.

One has to wonder what his disciples were thinking as they heard him make this audacious claim. A few disciples maybe, but “all flesh?” And, what meaning does it have for you today, two-thousand years removed this scene?

And, the timing of it? Our Lord could not have chosen a worse time to make his claim. Like a day old coke, the fizzle of His popularity had lost its snap, crackle, and pop. Politicians had had enough. Parties on the opposite side of the isle united to plan his demise.

At that very moment members of the Sanhedrin, Roman soldiers, and the temple guards were marching up the Mount of Olives to arrest him, to issue false charges against him, and to drag him through the rigors of an all-night mock trial. Pilate mistakenly thought he had the power to save or crucify Christ.

The verdict was predetermined. Guilty of blasphemy! Guilty of treason to Caesar! What? The Jews hated Rome, but you would never know on this day.

Even the devotion of his followers to Him was held by a thin, frayed cord. Within a few hours those who claimed total devotion to him would flee like thieves in the night seeking some burrow under which to hide. Like frightened rabbits they would flee behind trees and rocks out of fear of being identified with Jesus under accusation.

This is the hour Jesus chose to announce his jurisdiction over all men. From this time forward, our Lord endured the rigors of a kangaroo court governed by madmen hell bent on his crucifixion.

But, it is this claim of universal sovereignty that has inspired missionaries, calmed troubled souls, and refreshed weary pilgrims on the journey of life while “*quenching* the power of fire, *escaping* the edge of the sword, *being* made strong out of weakness, *becoming* mighty in war, and *putting* foreign armies to flight . . .” (Hebrews 11:34).

With all its transitoriness and changing fortunes, history is a storm with a fever. Men need shelter and a place to rest; authority to resist tyranny and to advance the gospel.

That sanctuary is Jesus and what He claims to be: Master and Lord, the final authority over sickness and disease, life and death, the seen and unseen, science and religions, politics and philosophy, morals and ethics. His is a royal claim that comes with proof of claim by virtue of his triumphant resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father.

ACTS 4:12

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Tiberius Caesar introduced propaganda in the first century that he was a god, that only through the government of Rome and his administration could men experience peace and happiness. When Peter declared there was no other name under heaven given among men by whom they must be saved, he declared war on Rome. Christ, not Caesar, was the Lord God.

ACTS 17:1-7

The apostles did not preach a honey-coated gospel that had more sugar than the local candy factory. They did not preach you could experience the “warm fuzzies” by soaking yourself in a bathtub of pure love.

The gospel that turned the world upside down was the message that King Jesus was superior in power and authority than Caesar!

PART II

We are working on the question, “Whether or not the authority of Christ has legal effect and superior claim to the assertions of de facto officers working for Leviathan corporations or whether they are mute before tyrants in positions of political power.”

Government men intoxicated with power are entering the dominions of Christ disturbing His peace.

Because the State exercises little restraint in using coercion, intimidation, and threats to impose their will upon free men, Christians must possess iron convictions about the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Overlapping of State and Federal jurisdictions leaves little room for free men to wiggle.

COLOSSIANS 2:8-10

Paul warned the Colossians to *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”*

Paul knew there would be men under some claim of authority that would invade the dominions of Christ and assert jurisdiction over the mind and property of believers; that Christ is not enough; that the “official” or “teacher” or “inducement” is an indispensable to Christian maturity and fruitfulness.

Paul employed the term “spoil” in the sense of plunder or robbery for some political or commercial purpose.

The word “philosophy” refers to an intellectual movement or legal theory. Paul is concerned about religious and political movements with plausible arguments designed to capture the believer’s devotion and turn their hearts from Christ. Liberalism, socialism, and Zionism come to mind. Christians are called to honor Christ above all human discretions, and to be suspicious of all legal and spiritual philosophies.

REVELATION 1:5-6

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, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (Rev. 1:5-6).

As the Apostle John comes to the conclusion of his opening salutation to the seven churches of Asia, he extols the person of Jesus Christ by whose authority he writes to them.

John refers to Christ in terms of his ministry on earth as “the faithful witness,” of his resurrection from the dead, making him “the first begotten from the dead,” and of his present exalted position as “the prince of the kings of the earth.”

Having extolled the person of Christ, John writes of what Christ has done for his people: he has cleansed them of sin and made them ministers of God who represent him on earth as “priests” and “kings.” John concludes his salutation with the prayer that the glory and dominion of Jesus Christ will increase more and more -- William O. Einwechter.

The remedy for being kidnapped by holy hucksters and pompous power hungry politicians is to remember that all the fullness of deity dwells in Christ, that the believer is complete in Him having everything he needs to be mature and productive in kingdom business, and that Christ has jurisdiction over all earthly rulers; i.e., our Lord makes a claim of authority over all human rulers and their provincial jurisdictions. Even Caesar has a duty to “give unto God what is God’s.”

But, this certainty and fixation of hope is not shared by all. His jurisdiction is challenged by Jew and atheist, by Muslims and Hindus, by judges and lawyers, by Republicans and Democrats, by feminists and homosexuals, by fornicators and womanizers.

The first duty of the Christian man is to renew his conviction that Jesus is Lord; to recognize His Lordship; to arrange his business and priorities under His authority.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not what I say?” Jesus asked.

We are taught to pray, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done.”

Only by confessing Him as Lord and believing in the heart that God raised him from the dead is a man saved (Romans 10:9). Only by arranging himself under the authority of Christ can a man be an effective servant endowed with power and certainty. Only under His authority can a man call others to the duty of faith; to stand before princes and kings and call them to change course and surrender to His authority. After all, Christ makes a claim on all men and all of man’s institutions.

The second duty of a Christian is to practically claim his domicile in the original jurisdiction of the dominions of Christ beginning with Genesis 1:26-28; to live under His law and His grace as announced through the gospel. His jurisdiction is not theoretical but real.

“The earth is the Lord’s and the people thereof” (Psalm 24:1).

It has practical effect, de jure authority, an actual power.

Only in the original jurisdiction can a man find refuge from the multiplicitous maritime jurisdictional claims of government, layers of entrenched bureaucracy, and leviathan corporations and their municipalities all claiming jurisdiction over the man, his property, and his body.

How can a man avoid being a slave of man?

Only by thinking and acting as a kingdom citizen subject to the dominions of Christ.

The third duty of man concomitant with confessing the Lordship of Christ is to question all other authority (Sometimes referred to as the first duty of citizens by the Framers).

Benjamin Franklin was correct when he urged query, “*It is the first responsibility of every citizen to question authority.*”

When the State seeks the total subjugation of the total man to total government, it exceeds the limitations of the State and limited powers granted to them by the People.

We live in a police state where the government acts like a god. It claims jurisdiction over the man, his income, and his *corporate ficta*. It demands total dedication to the state; incorporates rituals of pledging allegiance to the flag; sings the nation’s anthem at every sporting event; propounds service to god and country, god and country being equivalent.

How can a man overcome the claims of tyrants over him? Only by revisiting the authority of Christ who claims authority over all men and over all of man's institutions.

We need to ask overreaching officials,

“Where is it written that your duties to exercise your commission exceed my right to question the limitations of your authority?”

“By what authority are you demanding I answer your questions? As director and beneficiary of my legal PERSON you have 21 days to respond in writing and provide proof of claim as to your legal or lawful authority as a public servant, to address me at all.”

When they go silent, and they will, default them for failure to answer, rebut, or correct your reasonable inquiry. If they fail to answer, then they are estoppel by acquiescence. Any attempt to bring this up in legal hearing is “fraud upon the court” because you gained their tacit agreement that you were correct in the administrative process.

The Fourth duty of the Christian is to exercise that authority and to assert all necessary rights connected with kingdom business.

The kingdom of God is the rule of God. His law is for all men and all of man's institutions. If it is forbidden in the kingdom, then it is prohibited among men. If it is permitted in the kingdom of God, then it is permitted in one's course of duty to the King in everyday life. Therefore, you must assert your rights or the “system” assumes you have yielded them in favor of statutory benefits.

We have authority to resist demands made upon us by impostors and fees charged for the exercise of a human right. De facto authorities cannot lawfully turn rights into privileges and codes into law. You have God-given rights that supersede the establishment of government. But, this may not stop the State from challenging your rights. For this reason, Thomas Jefferson wanted the national motto to be: “Resistance to tyranny is service to God.”

Finally, the believer needs to make claims upon Christ because He has the power to act.

The author of Hebrews tells us to come boldly to the throne of grace. Because He sits on the throne, he has authority to answer prayer, resolve disputes, and provide resources for the Christian warrior; because it is throne of grace, the believer can rest assured his flaws and the faults of his prayers will not impede his plea.

CONCLUSION

You and I are like tiny sparkles dancing on the waters as the Sun sneaks over a cascade of mountain peaks to energize the promenade. We are tossed about for a moment by a roar of waves. We appear . . . then disappear all too quickly. All this would be a great tragedy, if it were not for the fact that Christ has jurisdiction over all things. Greatness consists not in length of days or the accumulation of temporal wealth, but in relation to Him who claims dominion over all flesh.

In the breath of an abbreviated life, Jesus Christ with his flaming words and naked hand lifts each generation out of the muck of a dull and ordinary existence by issuing His elect a permanent residence in His everlasting Kingdom.

The kingdom citizen, linking fortunes with Him, leans not upon the rickety scaffolding of shaky, fickle earthly political alliances, but stands erect, free, often alone, vibrant, and forgetful of self. He lives boldly claiming his place in the dominions of the Lord Jesus Christ. He quietly rows against the current of multiplicitous claims by men shouting commands from the bow of their ship to submit to their de facto authority on the sea of commerce.

While madmen intoxicated with power claim total jurisdiction of the total man to total government, the Christian resists knowing that He is under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He calls to the captains to change course on the canal of personal autonomy and for crew members to defect, to abandon ship, and to board the vessel commanded by the King of kings.

We implore men to stop eating from the fruit of the poisonous tree and to partake of the tree of life.

Therefore, we announce to the nations with great boldness His absolute authority in heaven and earth, calling men to repent and believe, baptizing the nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

38. CHRIST THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT

“And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations” (Isaiah 42:6).

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

“He is the mediator of the new testatment,” (Hebrews 9:15).

*“What God promised to the fathers, this He **has fulfilled** to us their children by raising Jesus from (from the dead)” (Acts 13, 32, 33).*

“For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

We have here one of the deeper, more complex truths in Scripture. Because of the dual aspect of His mediation, the reader would do well to read slowly and to think through the meaning of this wonderful title given to our Lord. Consider the following statements:

The blessings of God were conditioned upon Israel’s obedience (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 28:1, 2; Isaiah 1:19; Psalm 106.3). At Sinai, Israel pledged obedience (Exodus 19:8).

Unlike Israel who disobeyed God in their time of testing, Christ obeyed the law. He obeyed God’s law on Israel’s behalf, and fulfilled their duty to obey God.

In his **life**, He was Israel’s Representative and fulfilled Israel’s covenant responsibilities to God (Romans 5:20).

In His **death**, he removed the curse of covenant breaking by becoming a curse for them (Galatians 3:1-14).

In **resurrection**, Christ received the blessings of the covenant, and bestows them on the church in a first-fruits way (Ephesians 1:3).

In His **glorification**, all believers, Jews and Gentiles, will share in all the glory and blessing of his covenant accomplishments (Romans 8:28-32).

Not only is Christ *Israel's Representative and means of obeying God's law for them; He is God's Representative (Mediator)*, the means or locus of covenant blessings promised to Israel by God if they trust Him. He is the mediator of the mind of God to men. As God's Mediator, He seeks to get the will of God done on earth . . . and as such He represents the interest of God to men. Because sinful men are at variance with God, they can only resolve the conflict through His appointed Mediator—One that will not compromise His holiness in an effort to reconcile men to God.

When God entered into a contract with Israel, He promised to do certain thing for them. Israel promised to do certain things for God. Because Israel did not fulfill its part of the contract, God could not ethically give them the blessings of the covenant. Disobedient, God was obligated to judge the nation. But, God sent Jesus to be the “messenger of the covenant” and means of obtaining the blessings of the covenant (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 42:6).

First, God poured out the curses of the covenant on Christ and took for Israel what Israel could not take for itself. ***He was God's Representative Choice to be punished for Israel. He became Israel's Representative to be punished in the place of Israel*** (Galatians 4:13; Romans 11:26, 27).

Second, because Christ obeyed the Father, **He fulfilled Israel's responsibilities to God** on behalf of Israel (Romans 5:20). “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:8).

He did for Israel on behalf of Israel what Israel could not do for itself. He was obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8). He finished the work God gave Him to do (John 17:4). God was able to complete His part of the contract because Christ performed the duties of the contract (Hebrews 9:15). Christ was God's Mediator or means of fulfilling His word to Israel (Luke 2:25, 32, 34).

As Israel's representative he obeyed the law for them; as God's Representative, He became the means by which God could bestow the blessing of the covenant to Israel (Galatians 4:5, 6).

In His life Israel had kept all the statutes of the law. In His death Israel bore all the curses of the law. In resurrection, the ECCLESIA (called out ones from Israel) received all the blessings of the covenant.

In believing in Christ, true Jews accept Him as their Representative before God and as God's Representative to them.

False Jews did not believe and are named part of the synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9, 3:9).

Confessing Christ, Jews become members of spiritual Israel (**True Israel or the New Israel** which is composed of Christ and the community of the redeemed—Romans 9:6). For this reason

Acts 13:32 says, “What God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus from the dead.”

What most people fail to understand is that every promise, every hope, every dream created by the promises of God were realized in and through the resurrection of Christ because God made Him to be a *Covenant for the people* (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 42:6).

2 Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

If the Jews in Paul’s day were considered several eggs short of dozen in their understanding of this truth, what might be said of Christians who are still waiting for God to fulfill His promise to Israel two thousand years later? Christ is the new land and He must be possessed by faith. Because He is God’s Representative to men, and man’s Representative to God, He is the locus of all spiritual blessings and the conduit through Whom blessings come to men.

39. WHY JESUS WAS NOT A JEW

The word “Jew” is one of the most misunderstood and misused terms in the English language. And, there is a world of difference between the Biblical meaning of the word and the modern use of the term.

Because we are a Biblical people and the Bible is our authority for life and conduct, it is important to understand the difference between how the Bible uses the term “Jew” and how modern man uses the term.

THE BIBLICAL USE OF THE TERM “JEW.”

The first use of the term “Jew.”

2 Kings 16:6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

The first use of the word “Jew” or “Jews” in the Old Testament is in 2 Kings 16:6 and it is the word “Yewhuda” or “Judah” or “Judahite.”

It refers to the people who lived in Southern Israel or the land of Judah. The king of Syria drove out these Judahites and colonized the City of Elath with Syrians. Late in the period of the kings, people from the tribe of Judah and living in the south of Israel came to be known as “Judahites” or “Jews.”

There is no religious connotation connected with this word. The “Jews” were Hebrews living in an around Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom. “Yewhuda” refers to people from the tribe of Judah just like Samaritans refers to peoples living in or around Samaria. In this sense, Jesus was a Judahite because he was a man from the tribe of Judah.

The second use of the term “Jew.”

Galatians 1:13-14 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14. And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

The second use of the term “Jew” or “Jews” is used in a religious since. It is faith statement. In Galatians 1:13-14, Paul informs his readers that he was once a Pharisaical leader in the Jewish

Religion; that is, he was a follower of the traditions and laws and interpretations of this religious sect. And, it was this religious sect that hounded Christ and barked at his heels during His ministry on earth.

Jesus opposed the “Jews” because they assigned their traditions authority above and beyond the Word of God (See Matthew 15:1-9).

Judaism is a faith that believes law can transform men and regenerate society. The Jews revered law so much they saw law as the mediator between God and man.

But, Judaism is not about God’s law as much as it is about statutes and case law developed by Rabbis. Thus, the system is man’s attempt to subvert God’s law order for mankind. These legal interpretations were finally codified in the Talmud around 500 A.D.

It was the “Jews” who killed Christ and persecuted Christianity.

Jesus was NOT a “Jew” in the religious sense of the term.

Paul, a Benjamite, once a rabbinical Pharisee, called the members of this sect “dogs” (Phil. 3:1-5) John called them “Jews who are not” and “members of the synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

We would do well to remember that Jesus said to the leaders of this sect that their father was the Devil (John 8:44). Of course, in this sense of the term, JESUS WAS NOT A JEW! He opposed this religion at every turn.

MODERN USE OF THE TERM “JEW.”

The Jew in a racial sense of the term.

The modern term “Jew” refers to European people of Ashkenazi descent. Circa 700 A.D. the Czar of Khazaria, living around the Black Sea, decided to unify his people around the Jewish religion and ordered the nation to practice Judaism. These people were Gentiles with not a lick of Hebrew blood in them. They were Europeans.

The Kzar imported hundreds of Jewish rabbis from Babylon to teach the Khazarian people Judaism. As Khazarian Empire disintegrated, many of the Khazarian people migrated into Poland and Russia. These are the people of WWI and WWII that receive so much attention. At the end of WWII many of these people migrated to the United States and, or, Palestine. In Palestine, these Gentile, Ashkenazi people claimed to be “Biblical Jews” with a right to Palestine. This makes about as much sense as 80 million Chinese Moslems claiming to be Arabs.

Ninety Percent of the people who call themselves “Jews” today are of European Descent and it is used strictly in a racial sense. Thus, when an American says he is a “Jew” it means his descendants are Ashkenazi Europeans.

Of course, Jesus is from the Tribe of Judah is in no sense Jewish in the Khzarian sense of the term. FUTUREMORE, these Europeans have no more right to Palestine than Eskimos!

The term “Jew” in a national sense of the term.

The European, Ashkenazi People control the modern state of Israel. The parliament decided to define a “Jew” as anyone with a Jewish mother. This definition is not much help. Sammy David Junior converted to Judaism, but he is not considered a Jew. Ethiopians converted to Judaism and the second generation Negroes are now considered “Jews.” Thus, the definition only muddies the waters of definition. Thus, when Ashkenazi people claim to be Biblical people or possess a natural right to the Holy Land based on ancestry and Patriarchal Promises, **NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH!**

The term “Jew” in a political sense of the term.

In the political sense, the term “Jew” refers to “socialists,” or “communists” or Bolsheviks, or Zionist Communists. Zionism became a political movement during the late 19th century. It is a carnal, political belief that Ashkenazi Jews are destined to rule the world. When Karl Marx developed his political theory on economic socialism or communism, the Zionist jumped on it like chickens on a lady bug.

Thus, the communist revolution was completely Jewish. Lenin was a Jew. As the Czar resisted, many communist Jews migrated to Germany. The holocaust of 20 million Russian Christians was led by Jewish communists. Thus, the Jews in Germany were communists. When the Hitler’s German people fought against communism, they were fighting political, Zionist, communistic, racists Jews. When the Germans burned Jewish books, they were burning communist literature not libraries.

Likewise, in America! When we talk about “leftists” or “socialists” or “progressives” or “the new world order” or the “Banksters” or “Hollywood” or the “Media” or the “shadow government” or the “porn industry,” we are talking about a coterie of Ashkenazi, European Zionists; and, it is these people who control major industries in America.

The term “Jew” in a religious sense of the term.

There are a few European, Ashkenazi Jews that practice a form of Judaism. These are the people that study the Talmud, wear the tallit, and best fit the term “Jew” in the N.T. religious since of

the term. Their rabbis are Talmudic and of European Ashkenazi descent. They are no more Hebrew than a donkey is a race horse. Because they follow the Talmud, they are enemies of the gospel, members of the synagogue of Satan (Phil. 3:18; Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

In conclusion, Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, and in a tribal sense, he is a Jew; but, in no sense was He a “Jew” in the religious sense of the term. He has nothing in common with European, Ashkenazi Jews or the modern State of Israel or Talmudic Zionism. Jesus was not a Jew!

But, Christian people who believe in Christ have everything in common with Him. Whether British or Italian or German or African, those who believe that Christ is the Son of God and that He died for their sins are the “children of God,” and God’s chosen people, the New Israel, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12-12).

40. JESUS WHIPPIN' THE BANKSTERS

John 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

Revelation 18:21, 23 The great city of Babylon be thrown down . . . for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

INTRODUCTION

When commercial interest gained control of the administrators of God's temple, our Sovereign Lord made a scourge of small cords and drove out the money-changers.

Similarly, America is in the grip of Jewish banking elite known as the International Monetary Cartel (Federal Reserve 1913) governed by the UN. And, this den of thieves a.k.a. "Occupied Wall Street" has driven America into a debt society.

Isn't it about time to make whips and drive out the Banksters again?

FACTS ABOUT THE PASSAGE

First, the pronoun "he" refers to our one and only Sovereign, the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of the Sabbath, Master and Commander, King of kings, the only Lawgiver, Prince in His Father's temple.

The term "money-changer" (*kollubistes*) means "bankers" or "banksters" in the pejorative sense of the term. Because Roman coins had the image of Caesar on them, temple administrators required "offerings" and "purchases" be made with Hebrew shekels. Thus, currency was exchanged—for a price.

Second, the term "tables" (*trapeza*) was the bench or counter on which banking transactions were conducted. The term *trapeza* is properly translated "bank" in Luke 19:23; that is, the table was the bank. In overthrowing the bench, the Lord extinguished banking activity and banned Babylonian banking practices in the nation's capital.

Third, the temple complex was both a **civil and religious center**. There was no separation of church and state in Israel. The temple was the seat of Moses, the center where the Sanhedrin met

to manage national affairs; and, it was also the place of worship, the center of redemption and reconciliation of the people to God.

That is, in driving the money changers out of the temple complex, our Lord was driving the Banksters out of the nation—out of civil government as well as *church* government.

Fourth, the Lord Jesus Christ established an absolute principle: “Make not my Father’s House an house of merchandise.”

The Greek word “merchandise” is *emporion* from which we get the word *emporium*. The term refers to “a center of trade” or “center of commerce” or “retail store that sells commodities.”

The verb “make” (*poieite*) is a present, active imperative meaning that good Christian men are to constantly, perpetually resist and fight Merchant Law. The negative demands negation of specific acts; that is, negative law limits government. It imposes a duty on man to resist a particular evil. It restricts power that controls and robs men of freedom . . . and their wealth.

*THE Conventions of a number of the States having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, **that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added:** And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best insure the beneficent ends of its institution . . . (Preamble to the Bill of Rights)*

Emporiums are run by merchants under commercial law. Thus, we conclude that in driving out the Banksters, our Sovereign was abolishing commercial interests and Merchant Law in government as well as the church.

Fifth, the Banksters were Jews, not Gentiles. These Jews partook of the forbidden fruit of the Poisonous Tree, and were barred from the tree of life and the benefits of the Kingdom of God. Most of these Jewish Banksters learned their trade secrets from the University of Babylon, the rabbinical center of Judaism during the Intertestament Period.

In driving the Jewish Banksters out of the temple complex, our Master was not being “anti-Semitic.” He dealt with the source of evil. The poisonous root was Talmudic Jews who broke the Tenth Commandment of their One and only Lawgiver (Isaiah 33:22).

Sixth, the Lord God condemned the Banksters because they intentionally, maliciously, recklessly violated the Tenth Commandment, “Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s *property* . . .”

This commandment had the effect and force of law; that is, government is responsible to identify the lawbreakers and unlawful profiteers and to punish them. So, what is meant by “covet?” Is

God sanctioning “thought police” or the lawful motive of making money? The answer, of course, is “No!”

Covetous is more than desire. It involves a visible, tangible commercial scheme. Sin arises when evil desire is coupled with **subversive plans** and **clever schemes** to unlawfully possess the property of another—such as the “income tax” and “property tax” and “home loans” that shift wealth from the family to the State under color of law.

Thus, the Son made a whip and banned the Banksters because their money-changing operation was not a legitimate (*something lawful*) business, but a financial contrivance deployed to fleece God’s flock.

Seventh, in Luke 19:46 our Lord referred to the Jewish Banksters as a “den of thieves.” He was not addressing petty theft, but constructive, institutional fraud on a grand scale by Sanhedrin officials.

This was a “den of thieves,” not a thief’s hideout. The Banksters banded together to protect their commercial schemes so they could fleece God’s flock while performing religious duties; that is, these Jewish Banksters used the power of the State and the color of law to hide thievery (trade secrets).

Eighth, though rudimentary, these Babylonian Jewish Banksters excelled in the art of loan-sharking and money-changing during our Lord’s sojourn on earth.

Just as the simple serpent in the Garden of Eden grew into a hideous dragon in Revelation (12), Jewish usury grew into a huge, complex, hideous international Monster through the centuries which the apostle John called “Mystery Babylon” or the “Great Harlot” (Revelation 17-18)

Complete with “sorceries” (Rev. 18:23), the whole earth comes under the spell of this hideous Banking Magician. These “sorceries” include a depository of magic tricks: sophisticated commercial terms, credit card scams, Federal Reserve Notes, foreclosures mills, electronic funds, interest on nothing, income, wages, junk bonds, toxic securities, derivatives, filter stocks, and other fictitious assets.

These Jewish, serpent Banksters active during our Lord’s lifetime morphed into the grotesque Ashkenazi Banking Monster we know today:

- Ben Bernanke, Federal Reserve Bank or FED.
- Thomas J. Benison of JPMorgan Chase & Company;

- James J. Hill of Morgan Stanley;
- Athanassios Diplas of Deutsche Bank;
- Paul Hamill of [UBS](#);
- Paul Mitrokostas of [Barclays](#);
- Andy Hubbard of Credit Suisse;
- Oliver Frankel of Goldman Sachs;
- Ali Balali of Bank of America; and
- Biswarup Chatterjee of Citigroup.”
- Trilateral Commission
- Council on Foreign Relations, Club Rome, and the modern Illuminati.
- The IRS, the collection agency for the International Monetary fund.

With all three branches of government in bed with the banking prostitutes; and, with “religious societies” (a.k.a. “churches”) committing fornication with the Banksters’ bedroom master, the IRS, isn’t it about time God’s bondservants made a cat of nine tails to drive out the Thieves again? Or, maybe we should implore Heaven to use a millstone and throw the covetous hookers into sea (Revelation 18:21).

41. THE ANGER OF JESUS

Mark 3:5 And he looked around at them with anger . . .

Everybody loves a sweet Jesus. But, do men love a holy Jesus?

In a decadent society that trains people to be nice, it is all the more important salty Christians understand they have God's permission to be angry.

We have before us the only passage that I know that directly tells us about the anger of our Lord.

Anger is an attribute of God and it is perfectly manifest in this passage. It is a virtue that stirs a righteous man to expose and resist evil.

The question before us today is, "What makes Christ angry?"

Because our anger is usually petty and childish, we fail to see righteous anger as a virtue.

Considering the Word of God commands us "to be angry and sin not," it is important for us to manage our own anger righteously. We fight fleshly passion, and in so doing often resist anger over things that require a response of disparagement and outrage.

It is not wrong to be angry over injustice. In fact, we must learn to cultivate righteous anger and to develop umbrage over just causes.

QUESTION: WHAT MAKES CHRIST ANGRY?

Mark 3:5 And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

ANGER CAME FROM THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST.

Notice the phrase, "with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart."

Grief is one cause of umbrage. The word "grieve" means "to be emotionally moved." The verb is in the passive; that is, something from the outside disturbed the inner peace of our Lord.

This is not the same as being angry for not getting our way or having our lusts stifled. Christ was not easily offended nor did He have an inner "wounded child." This was not a minor social faux pas. The religious leaders had devised a plan to kill Him.

CHRIST WAS GRIEVED BECAUSE OF THE EVIL AT WORK IN THE SOUL OF HIS ADVERSARIES.

The Pharisees planted this handicapped man in the congregation to test Christ's submission to rabbinical, sabbatical law.

Remember, while Christ was a son of David from the tribe of Judah, He was not a Jew. He did not follow, practice, or approve of Judaism. There was no Talmud in Jesus.

ANGER WAS AROUSED BECAUSE OF THE HARDNESS OF HEART OF HIS AUDIENCE.

Hardness of heart is a firm, defiant resistance to the truth. It is a spiritual position that will not receive the Word of God. A hard heart is cold, insensitive, unfeeling, and unyielding. No matter what He did, the Pharisees were going to level a tort against Him.

ANGER WAS AROUSED BECAUSE THE LEADERS IN THE SYNAGOGUE HAD NO FEELINGS FOR THE MAN.

The account begins with, “. . . a man was there with a withered hand.”

In their midst was a cripple—a man that lived his life with great difficulty and misery. One can only imagine what it would be like to go through life with only one hand. You would think the people would be overjoyed to see this poor soul relieved of his suffering. But, Oh No! The leaders were angry with Jesus for healing the man.

These people knew Christ had the power to heal the man, but they did not want him healed. They were more interested in indicting Christ than seeing this man relieved of his pain. They had no feeling or grief for the afflicted. Without feeling, we are useless to God. Without feeling we are no more than zombie or a dead fictional corporation. Feeling is part of our humanity, but sin can rob us of feeling pain over the sufferings of other men.

In fact, the definition of “psychopath” includes a person who has no feelings for others. A psychopath can act with great coldness and indifference toward a victim while feeling morally superior to other men. The term “insouciance” comes to mind.

Do you remember when the space Challenger blew up and all the astronauts perished (1986)? The announcer simply continued his narration with, “there appears to be . . . a major malfunction . . .” There were no screams or tears or “Oh, my God!” There wasn't even a blip on the announcer's emotional radar screen. No emotion . . . this is hardness of heart . . . a pathological disorder within the soul.

His audience had no feelings for the man with a withered hand. A man without compassion and sentience is not fully human. And, this grieved Christ.

THE ANGER OF CHRIST WAS AROUSED OVER THE MALICIOUS INTENT OF HIS AUDIENCE.

Mark 3:2 And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him.

The word “accuse” (katagoreo) is a legal term (Acts 22:30; 24:2; 24:8), and it means “to file charges” or to file a writ of error in a court of law against another. These Pharisees were leaning forward and salivating with anticipation to find a reason to charge Christ with a crime.

This was more than “fault finding.” It was malicious prosecution, a form of barratry, and groundless accusation. The issuance of false claims against Christ in order to have him indicted, tried, convicted, and executed was not a crime against Him, but an intentional, willful, flagrant, rebellious violation of God’s law.

His accusers searched high and low for probable cause to create an indictment.

Under wretched Judaism, healing the afflicted man on the Sabbath was *mala prohibita* (things prohibited by statute) but not *mala en se* (things wrong in and of themselves).

Christ observed their conspiracy to trap him in legal proceedings and asked them, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

In asking this question, Christ pierced their abuse of law by going to the heart of true law. Was healing a man on the Sabbath *mala en se*? How could evil be committed by making a man whole?

The answer of course was that in restoring health no evil or harm was being committed. And, all true law is designed to prosecute injury to people or their property. No injury, no crime! No crime, no subject matter jurisdiction.

THEIR SILENCE AROUSED THE ANGER OF CHRIST:

“But they were silent” (3:4).

Silence is a form of communication. It is particularly egregious when men have a duty to speak. The Lord asked the national leaders a question, and when the Lord asks a question, men are obligated to give an answer!

But, they chose a shocking course of silence (*sub silentio*) which ended up being tacit procurement that our Lord was correct and that they were in error. In so doing, the Lord's adversaries acquiesced to the Lord's proposition that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

But, their silence also revealed their malice aforethought.

“Silence can only be equated with fraud when there is a legal and moral duty to speak or when an inquiry left unanswered would be intentionally misleading. We cannot condone this shocking conduct . . . If that is the case we hope our message is clear. This sort of deception will not be tolerated and if this is routine it should be corrected immediately” (U.S. v. Prudden, 424 F.2d. 1021; U.S. v. Tweel, 550 F. 2d. 297, 299, 300 (1977)).

MALICIOUS PROSECUTION ANGERS CHRIST.

The anger of Christ is aroused when civil authorities abuse their discretionary powers and proceed with malicious prosecution under color of law.

Judaism is famous for its rabbinical decisions and case law surrounding the Sabbath so they need not be repeated here. Putting it succinctly, the Pharisees were legalists who multiplied laws in order to control people and to increase their power. Pharisees believed more legislation could create a perfect jural society. But, more and more laws make criminals out of every man.

Edwin Meese offered these insights (Heritage Foundation):

America is in the throes of “overcriminalization.”

We are making and enforcing far too many criminal laws that create traps for the innocent but unwary, and threaten to turn otherwise respectable, law-abiding citizens into criminals. Consider a few examples from the new book “One Nation Under Arrest”:

- A 12-year old girl arrested and handcuffed for eating one French fry on the Washington subway system.
- A cancer-ridden grandmother arrested and criminally charged for refusing to trim her hedges the way officials in Palo Alto, Calif., were trying to force her to.
- A former high-school science whiz kid sent to prison after initially being arrested by FBI agents clad in SWAT gear for failing to affix a federally mandated sticker to his otherwise legal UPS package.

- A 67-year-old grandfather imprisoned because some of the paperwork for his home-based orchid business did not satisfy an international treaty.

Further, Jesus' accusers acted with *mala en se* in their hearts under color of law (*mala prohibita*) to deprive Him of His rights under God.

One has to ask, "How they could sleep at night?" It is simple: like lawyers to day, they lie on one side and then roll over and lie on the other side . . . (smile)

These people conspired to trap Him in criminal proceedings, not based upon a violation of the Ten Commandments or injury to man, but based upon factual violations of frivolous rabbinical rulings. Color of law is man-made regulations that have the appearance of law, but are, in practical effect, a means of controlling people or extracting fines for commercial interest.

It is a frivolous complaint trumped up in legal language. And . . . acts under color of law anger our Lord!

Further, acts under color of law end up being a violation of God's law. The deprivation of a man's rights by public officials is so serious the U.S. Code assigns fees and prison time against violators . . . if you can prove it (18 U.S.C. 241, 242; 42 U.S.C. §1983).

The Pharisees conspired together to indict Christ under color of law in summary judgment without due process. His conviction was a foregone conclusion.

This confrontation by the Pharisees was not about justice, but misapplication of law to destroy a political appointment.

The text says, "They watched him" not to see what would happen, but to find probable cause to indict Him; that is, they were willing to use their flawed, frivolous, man-made, rabbinical-law rulings to create allegations against Christ that would lead to legal proceedings in a kangaroo court to put Him to death.

Think of it! How would you like to have frivolous charges made against you under color of law in a summary proceeding under color of authority in a tribunal that disregards due process, true law, and justice in order to extract money from you? Which, by the way, is what most U.S. Courts do!

Pseudo charges using pseudo law in a pseudo court under color of process angered the King of kings and Judge of all men!

Slander and libel anger Christ.

Any charge against Christ for violation of God's law would have been fraud and barratry . . . vexatious litigation . . . a total sham!

False allegations under misapplication of law can destroy a man's reputation and ministry. A malicious witness eager to find fault in order to criminalize righteous behavior is treachery, pure and simple. And, it angered our Lord!

After our Lord healed the crippled man, the Pharisees "went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him about "how to destroy him" (Mark 3:6); that is, instead of being grateful for the manifestation of heavenly power and the healing of this man, they engaged in a conspiracy to commit the crime of all time.

In so doing, they violated the Tenth Commandment, "Thou shall not *construct a plan* to deprive a man of his . . . *property or life.*"

The real lawbreakers and criminals were the government officials. Selah!

The Washington Post reported, "in 2014, law enforcement took more stuff from people than burglars did." As the *Post* notes, "the Treasury and Justice departments deposited more than \$5 billion into their respective asset forfeiture funds. That same year, the FBI reports that burglary losses topped out at \$3.5 billion."

"In 2015, the federal government seized nearly [\\$2.6 billion worth of airplanes, houses, cash, jewelry, cars and other items](#) under the guise of civil asset forfeiture" (Rutherford Institute).

These apostate Jews abused the legal process to initiate legal proceeding through the Herodian Roman courts under color of law in summary proceedings to destroy Christ; that is, these frauds used government courts to proceed with their malicious prosecution of our precious Savior. All claims against Christ were frivolous . . . and a malicious abuse of power.

In conclusion, anger is a virtue of Christ; and, what angered Him was the hardness of heart of these civil rulers who plotted to act under color of law, color of process, and color of authority to complete their malicious process against Him for offences *mala prohibita*.

It angered Him that they had no sentience toward the crippled man. And our Lord exposed the psychopathic condition of these barristers.

By way of application, what makes us angry?

Do petty, minor infractions that disturb our lusts for comfort and bruise our emotions? Or, does the real, substantial injustice taking placing in our town by civil rulers acting under color of law,

color of process, and color of authority to complete malicious process against innocent men make us angry?

The prosecution of the Kentucky Court Clerk Kim Davis (September 2015) for contempt of court for refusal to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples, or the fabricated charge of “structuring” against Kent Hovind by the IRS (2006), and the capital punishment of innocent, unborn babies comes to mind.

“Laws are no longer made by a rational process of public discussion; they are made by a process of blackmail and intimidation, and they are executed in the same manner. The typical lawmaker of today is a man wholly devoid of principle — a mere counter in a grotesque and knavish game. If the right pressure could be applied to him, he would be cheerfully in favor of polygamy, astrology or cannibalism. It is the aim of the Bill of Rights, if it has any remaining aim at all, to curb such prehensile gentry. Its function is to set a limitation upon their power to harry and oppress us to their own private profit.”— H.L. Mencken

In a day and age where reckless, malicious, Godless prosecution abounds in State courts operating under statutes *mala prohibita*, a little righteous indignation from God’s sweet sheep would be refreshing.

We love our Lord. His name is the sweetest name we know. But, do we love a holy Jesus as we should?

42. KING JESUS

Matthew 2:1; John 1:49; Acts 17:6-7

The gospel that turned the world upside down taught” another king, King Jesus” (Acts 17:6-7).

The world, of course, does not acknowledge Jesus as King . . . and therefore has rejected His law. Christians, however, acknowledge the crown rights of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Jews, then and now, do not accept the fact that Jesus is King of Israel: “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14).

Many Christians, especially in the dispensational camp, are uncomfortable with calling Jesus, “King.” These believers assert that it is inappropriate to call Jesus “King of Israel” because they believe this title is reserved for the alleged millennial period in the future where Jesus will supposedly rule the nation of geo-political Israel.

The phrase “king of kings” is used in Scripture six times.

Once, the title is applied to God the Father, and twice to the Lord Jesus (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). The other three (Ezra 7:12; Ezekiel 26:7; Daniel 2:37) refer to either Artaxerxes or Nebuchadnezzar, kings who used the phrase to express their absolute sovereignty over their respective realms (Persia and Babylon).

The phrase “lord of lords” is used in Scripture five times, and only referring to God’s rule (Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalm 136:3; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). Used together, the two phrases refer only to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fundamentally, the idea of Jesus being King of kings and Lord of lords means that there is no higher authority. Since He rose from the dead, He is God and He is Lord. His reign over all things is absolute and inviolable. God and placed Him over all things, “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” ([Ephesians 1:21-23](#)). (Gotquestions.org. CEO S. Michael Haudman)

Interestingly, the Revolutionary Americans cried, “No King but Jesus.”

It was this title, “King Jesus,” that united the Colonies and inspired courage to establish a new nation (Marshall & Manual, 1977, p. 254).

But, it was the Scottish Covenanters (1528-1688) who paid the price for calling Jesus “King.” Rejecting the doctrine of the “Divine Right of Kings” along with the attempt of James VI (1566-1625) to force Anglicanism down their throats, blood flowed in the hills of the Scots. Inspired by the Covenanters, early Americans proclaimed “No king, but King Jesus.” The Spirit announced unashamedly,

John 12:15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

Revelation 17:24 These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.

Revelation 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

During “Scotland’s cloudy sky, the church historian Kirkton wrote: “I verily believe that there were more souls converted to Christ in that short time [i.e. 1638-1660, ‘between the signing and the sifting’] than in any other season since the Reformation . . . Every parish had a minister, every village had a school, every family almost had a Bible” (For Christ’s Crown and Covenant).

Furthermore, **the Treaty of Verona (1845)** in which the then-Pope and the British Monarch, both Trustees of the American national trust, agreed **that the representative form of government was incompatible with Divine Right of Kings and with Papal Supremacy**, and so **both acted in secretive Breach of Trust**. The British Monarch issued **Letters of Marque⁽¹⁾ and Reprisal⁽²⁾** to the members of the **Bar Association (British Crown Commercial Company)** which issued licenses to privateers to attack American “vessels” in international jurisdictions of the law (Judge Anna von Reitz).

Thus, the truth that Jesus is King was vigorously quashed during the Civil War Period by attorneys loyal to Britain.

The Magi looked for Jesus, the king of Israel (Matthew 2:1-2). The title “King of Israel” does not appear to be an appellation that Jesus received during his ministry, but the general populace considered Jesus to be the King of Israel. In reference to Jesus’ triumphal entry, the Spirit assigned the title “king” to Jesus (Matthew 21:5; Zechariah 9:9).

Nathanael associated the term “Son of God” with Jesus being the “King of Israel.” Jesus’ accusers connected the term “King of Israel” with the “Christ” as a ruler of Israel (Luke 23:2).

Pilate asked Jesus if he was the “King of Israel,” but Jesus answered his question with a question and then used it to instruct Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:33ff). The crowd mocked Jesus calling Him “King” (John 19:3).

When Pilate tried to release Jesus, he presented him as “King” to the riotous crowd, but crowd hypocritically stated, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15).

The doctrine that “turned the world upside down” was that the Lord Jesus Christ was a King greater than Caesar (Acts 17:5-7).

The gospel was born in a world of emperor worship and statism. In fact, Rome taught that Caesar was a god and that there was no salvation in any other save Caesar. When Peter preached, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” he declared war on Rome (Acts 4:12).

The term “King” was applied to Jesus in Paul’s proclamation of the kingdom gospel, or at least, we can deduce that Paul called Jesus “King” (Acts 17:6-7). And, it was the preaching of King Jesus that incited the riot. But it does not appear to be a majority title that Paul was seeking to communicate.

Possibly, Paul played down the kingship of Jesus in order not to incite the hostility of the Romans who were loyal to Caesar. Paul did not hesitate, however, to refer to Jesus as King to his disciple Timothy (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15). In fact, in Paul’s accolades of praise, he used the title “King of kings, and Lord of lords” to inspire Timothy and to provoke loyal service to the gospel.

In Revelation, John sees the Lamb obtaining victory over the beast because He is “Lord of lords, and King of kings” and clearly ascribes to Him the title (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). YHWH was called “King of the Nations” (Jeremiah 10:7), and the title is applied to Christ (Revelation 15:3-4).

He is declared to be Lord and He should be my Lord; Lord of my family; Lord of my church; and, Lord of the United States of America.

The implication of Jesus being King of the Nations is profound because He claims jurisdiction over every nation, man, woman and child (John 17:2); that is, if Jesus is indeed King of the Nations, then His bondservants have the authority to call kings, presidents, and rulers to obey His Word; to surrender their governments to the authority of the written Word.

So important are the crown rights of King Jesus, that 18,000 Scottish Covenanters (1528-1688), giants among men who rejected prelacy, were hung, burned, tortured, beheaded, and starved in the 16th century by tyrannical kings and their governors because they resisted the heretical English Episcopalian, quasi-Catholic statist practice of appointing carnal, civil, secular kings as Head of the Church . . . and State.

[9] whom we confess and avow to be the Messiah promised, the only Head of his kirk, our just Lawgiver, our only High Priest, Advocate, and Mediator.[10] In which honours and offices, if man or angel presume to intrude themselves, we utterly detest and abhor them, as blasphemous to our Sovereign and Supreme Governor, Christ Jesus (Ascension, Scottish Confession of Faith, 1560).

Their primary battle was not with the Roman Catholic Church, but with the English government which sought total jurisdiction over the total church. While the Covenanters honored the king and intended him no harm, they refused to have a secular, worldly prince as Head of the Kirk. The king, under God, had his jurisdiction; the church, under God, had their jurisdiction. Church and State had to be separate.

The issue, then, is not whether Jesus is King of the Nations, or King of the Kirk, but will men acknowledge him as such!

That Jesus is King of the Nations, and King of the Kirk, is true . . . in two separate jurisdictions. Oh, that the Church might recognized Jesus as Head of the Church; and, that the State might recognize King Jesus as Head of State without amalgamation.

In *ACLU et.al. v. Judge Roy Moore*, a.k.a. the *Ten Commandments Case 2002*, this issue surfaced in federal court. When Judge Myron Thompson, federal judge, understood that the real issue was not the presence of the Ten Commandments' monument in the foyer of the Alabama Supreme Court, but that its presence was there to remind the state that it was accountable to the King of the Nations and His Law-word, Judge Thompson would have none of it. No tyrant would (*Glassroth v. Moore and Maddox et al. v. Moore*).

Possibly, the greatest example of men grasping the truth of King Jesus was during the Reformation and the confessions of the Scottish Covenanters:

"The following four testimonies of men who lost their lives confessing that Christ was king:

(I) 'I leave my testimony against Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism; against all profanity and everything contrary to sound doctrine; particularly against all usurpations made upon Christ's right, who is the Prince of the Kings of the earth,

who alone must bear the glory of ruling His own kingdom, the Church.’ (James Renwick)

(2) ‘I am come here this day to lay down my life for owning Jesus Christ’s despised interest, and for asserting that He is King, and for averring that He is Head of His own Church.’ (James Skene)

(3) ‘I suffer for maintaining that Christ is a free King in His own house.’ (Isabel Alison)

(4) ‘I leave my testimony as a dying man against the horrid usurpation of our Lord’s prerogative and crown right.’ (Captain John Paton)" (For Christ’s Crown and Covenant)

In conclusion, Jesus was the King of Israel, but He never presented Himself as such to the nation. His ministry on earth was primarily redemptive, and secondarily political. Jesus was promised the throne of Israel (Luke 1:32). But He did not receive this authority until his exaltation. In His ascension, Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God and is viewed as sitting on the throne of God (Acts 2:30-36; Hebrews 1:8; 8:3; 12:2; Revelation 3:21; 5:1-7; 7:17; 22:1). In these verses, the throne of God and throne of the Lamb are synonymous and are indistinguishable. The throne of David appears to be transferred to heaven in Acts two; that is, the fulfillment was greater than the promise.

Consequently, the title King of Israel appears to be merged and absorbed into the greater title, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” The title “King” was not used of Jesus readily in the Book of Acts, not because Jesus was not King, but in order not to incite riots in Caesar’s realm. There are easier ways to commit suicide.

The title “King Jesus,” however, was used during the Colonial Period of American History, not only to incite riot, but to inspire obedience by the Colonists to principles higher than human authority. From this settled conviction, Francis Scott Key wrote “and this be our motto, ‘In God is our trust’” (Star Spangle Banner). It appears to me, in a day an age where men idolize the State, we need to revive the title, “No King but Jesus!”

*‘Turn us again, O Lord our God,
And upon us vouchsafe
To make Thy countenance to shine,
And so we shall be safe.’
(Psalm 80.3. Scottish Metrical Version) John M Brentnall*

(1) Letters of Marque: In the days of fighting sail, a **letter of marque** and reprisal was a government license authorizing a person (known as a privateer) to attack and capture enemy vessels and bring them before admiralty courts for condemnation and sale.

(2) Letters of Marque and Reprisal are commissions or warrants issued to someone to commit what would otherwise be acts of piracy. They will normally contain the following first three elements, unless they imply or refer to a declaration of war to define the enemies, and may optionally contain the remainder:

- Names person, authorizes him to pass beyond borders with forces under his command.
- Specifies nationality of targets for action.
- Authorizes seizure or destruction of assets or personnel of target nationality.
- Describes offense for which commission is issued as reprisal.
- Restriction on time, manner, place, or amount of reprisal.(Source: <http://www.constitution.org/mil/lmr/lmr.htm>)

Source: Five Pillars of the Gospel by Dr. Brook Stockton (Unpublished manuscript)

43. PRECIOUS JESUS

1 Peter 2:4 . . . rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God

Men are in search of precious stones and prized commodities. Before us stands someone more valuable than fine wine and precious jewels—a living stone, the Son of God.

Christians call Him Precious Jesus or Sweet Jesus. While He is rejected of men, He is cherished by God and by us.

HIS NAME IS PRECIOUS.

Jesus is the sweetest name I know. It means “Savior.” “He came to save his people from their sins.” He does not assist or help men to be saved. He saves! Who can break the power of sin’s chains? Precious Jesus!

There is something about the name Jesus
Something about the name Jesus.
It is the sweetest name I know Oh how I love the name Jesus
It is the sweetest name I know.
Oh how I love the name Jesus,

HIS NATURE IS PRECIOUS.

He is the Word made flesh. Men have believed since the earliest times Jesus Christ had two distinct natures in union but “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation;” that is, He is the God-man having both the nature of God and the nature of man. He is the unique Son of God, fully God, but fully man.

HIS CHARACTER IS PRECIOUS.

All the virtues of justice and grace, righteousness and love, masculinity and femininity coalesce in Him. He is tough and tender; strict but just; loving but not permissive; holy, but not aloof. He has no outstanding virtue because all virtues cleave to Him in perfect balance and harmony.

HIS POSITION IS PRECIOUS.

Three offices existed in Israel and it was a privilege to be attached to one of them. Jesus holds all three offices: prophet, priest, king. Being exalted to the right hand of God means that His

administration has been inaugurated and is in effect. He is the Prophet that speaks the Word of God to us; the Priest that mediates our concerns to God; the King that rules our lives.

HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER IS PRECIOUS.

He is the unique Son of God without beginning or end—the Ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

The Father said on three occasions, “This is my beloved Son. Hear ye Him.”

He is the “root out of dry ground,” “the arm of the Lord,” “the mighty God” in human form. He was the one man on earth fully committed to doing the will of God. Obedient unto death, He is the “bread of God” (Numbers 28:2), the precious Son in whom the Father is well pleased.

HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE PRECIOUS.

He redeemed humanity and removed the curse all the way back to Adam. In his life He kept the law; and, in his death, He met the claims of Divine holiness. There is no sin so bad or stain so deep He cannot cleanse. He saves the chief of sinners and makes the sinner as white as snow. Death is an enemy! Man’s desire for life is not found in science or medicine, but in the gospel. In His resurrection, He triumphed over death to shower the hope of eternal life upon believing men.

But, not everyone feels that that Jesus is precious!

When our Lord stood before Herod, the soldiers esteemed Him as “naught” (nothing).

Luke 23:11 And Herod with his men of war set him at naught, and mocked him,

To the politicians of that day, Jesus was a nothing, a zero, a blank in history.

Think of it! The Creator, the Architect of the universe, the King of Israel, the Son of God in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge was standing before them, and in their warped opinion, Christ’s value was considered less than a wooden nickel.

To them, He is the Stone of Stumbling and a Rock of Offence (1 Peter 2:8).

But, to us He is precious Jesus, our Lord and Savior, the Lamb of God, a precious cornerstone in whom are all the excellencies of Divinity reside, the Just One, the Shepherd of our souls, the Chief Shepherd to whom dominion and glory belong forever. Amen!

Source: Five Pillars of the Gospel, Stockton

44. CHRIST, OUR PASSOVER LAMB

1 Corinthians 5:7

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

How do you prepare the world to receive the wonders of Christ and the glories of His accomplishments at Calvary?

One way God did it was by instituting the feasts of Israel, namely the Passover, to commemorate not only Israel's stunning redemption from slavery in Egypt, but to shadow the achievements of God's true Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ (Exodus 12).

Before us is a family feast, not a temple sacrament. The head of the family led the service, not a priest.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron . . .” (12:1):

Moses and Aaron represent Israel's civil and ecclesiastic authority.

The Passover was not something created by man for man. The Lord instituted the feast because of His sovereignty and love. Obeying the instructions given for the Passover saved the nation. Because God instructed His people on the means of salvation, this chapter ought to be of tremendous interest to us as it is a mammoth illustration of the wonders of Christ and the glories of His accomplishments at the cross effecting our salvation.

Moreover, the Passover became a pivotal sacrament that not only saved the nation, but the memorialization of the Passover became a landmark festival in the life of the nation -- a festival that found its perfection in the cross and remembrance of Christ during the Breaking of the Bread (1 Corinthians 11:17ff).

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months . . . to you” (12:2):

The Passover was so revolutionary it became the "birthday" of the nation. What Independence Day (July 4th) is to Americans, the 14th of Nisan became to Israel. It marked the birth of a nation, their deliverance from tax slavery and serfdom, and their march to freedom in the Holy Land.

As the month of Nisan was the beginning of the religious calendar of the Hebrews (Exodus 12:3), the coming of Christ is the beginning of Christian history – all history is viewed as BC or AD; and, individual Christians view their own history as one before they knew Christ (BC), and the one they enjoy after coming to know Him (AD). He is the beginning of eternal life for believers.

As the Passover commemorated Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt, the Lord's Supper commemorates the believer's redemption through faith in God's Lamb and His sacrifice at Calvary.

The Passover was the first feast out of seven during the Hebrew year. These national holidays were called the "feasts of the Lord" (Leviticus 23:4). These feasts find their ultimate fulfillment at the cross which are commemorated at the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23ff).

"On In the tenth day of this month . . ." (12:3):

Just as each household selected a lamb on the 10th day of Nisan to protect them from the death plague in Egypt, Christ is the selected lamb of God to save believers from the judgment to come.

[Note: Christ rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (the 10th of Nisan), and was killed four days later on Wednesday, the 14th of Nisan.

Matthew 1:21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

" . . . they shall take (choose) to them every man a lamb" (12:3):

God charged the man, the head of the home, with the duty of protecting his family.

Just as each family chose a lamb as a substitute for the firstborn to protect the people in the house, Christians have chosen the Lamb of God as their Savior and Redeemer (John 1:10-13; Matthew 11:29; John 5:24).

[Note: Though there were many lambs chosen during the Exodus event, there is only ONE Lamb in the mind of God. The word "lamb" is always in the singular, never in the plural. Likewise, there is only one Lamb in history that can save sinners . . . only one currency . . . only one way to God . . . but, there are many ways to hell.]

The text says, “If the household be too small . . .” (12:4). It does not say, “If the lamb is too small.” This little detail informs us of the sufficiency of the Lamb of God and the power of the blood to save believers from all sin (1 John 1:7).

We are not saved by our works, but His works; not by our sweat and blood, but by His shed blood. Our obedience to God's law beautifies us, but it does not add to salvation.

There is a lamb sufficient to save a man (Genesis 4); a lamb sufficient to save a family (Exodus 12); a lamb sufficient to save a nation (Leviticus 16); and “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

“Your lamb (seh) shall be without blemish . . .” (12:5):

Just as the exodus lamb had to be healthy and whole, the Lamb of God was without blemish. He *had no sin, did no sin, and knew no sin.*

1 Peter 1:19 (NASB) but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB) He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

“ . . . a male of the first year . . .” (12:5):

Just as the Passover lamb had to be a male, as the stronger of the two sexes, Jesus was a man's man, powerful in virtue, and the strongest of the strong in moral courage.

Taking a lamb “in its youth” emphasizes strength and health. The focus on youthfulness and the male gender instructed Israel that salvation had to be won by a Champion among us, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“ . . . ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:” (12:5):

It mattered not whether the Passover sacrifice was a lamb or goat. Both are small little creatures known for their harmless and pet-like qualities.

Just as the sacrifice could be taken from among sheep or goats, Christ was chosen because He was harmless and pure. Though there are a great number of biological [differences between sheep and goats](#), these animals were chosen because of their humble, gentle nature. These sensitive grass grazers represent Him Who is “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month . . .” (12:6):

Just as the chosen Passover lamb was tested for four days, our Lord was scrutinized by the eyes of an entire nation for any moral blemish that might surface under testing.

Jesus is the unblemished Lamb of God. "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased," declared the Father (Luke 3:22). Three courts arraigned Jesus: the Court of the Sanhedrin; the Court of Herod; and the Court of Rome: All three declared there was no probable cause to have Him arrested. Pilate announced three times, "I find no fault in this man" (John 18:38; 9:4; 9:6).

Just as the lamb was chosen on the 10th day and watched until the 14th day (12:6), our Lord was tested forty days in the wilderness by Satan. Further, our Lord was intensely questioned and tested by the leaders of the nation from the 10th of Nissan (Passover Sunday) until the 14th of Nissan (Wednesday Passover week) wherein no lawful accusation could be brought against Him.

“ . . . and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it . . . ” (12:6):

Each man was charged with choosing a lamb to satisfy the claims of Divine justice, but the whole assembly was charged with executing the lamb. Notice the singular "it." Though there were many lambs slain that evening, there was only One Lamb in the eyes of God -- a Lamb sufficient to save the whole nation.

Just as the whole congregation is seen as the agent of death, there is a sense in which all humanity is responsible for the death of our Lord. Further, like Israel chose the Passover lamb as their chosen substitute, the People of God have chosen Christ as their Representative ([1 Timothy 2:5](#)).

Just as the typical Passover lamb was slain at evening between 3:00-6:00 PM on the 14th of Nissan, our Lord, the true Lamb of God (the archetype), died on the cross at the ninth hour (3:00 PM) as Jews were preparing for the iconic Passover meal on Wednesday evening (Mark 15:34).

“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses . . .” (12:7):

In the east, many nations provide "food offerings" to the gods. The Hindus call these offerings "prasadam" which means "mercy."

The Hindus say the only offerings acceptable to the gods are vegetarian offerings. But, what value are vegetables to a spirit being? Offering veges to God to atone for sins is like offering an American a skillet full of cockroaches for breakfast. You'd be better off accusing a cowboy of wearing panties than insulting God with potatoes, peas, and pears.

But, blood? Hindus follow the "way of Cain" ([Jude 11](#)), but Christians follow the religion of Abel, the first prophet in the Bible ([Luke 11:50-51](#); [Hebrews 9:22](#)).

If witch doctors in New Orleans understand blood attracts the spirits and for this reason eat chicken hearts and add blood to their juju ceremonies, how much more should Christians understand the importance of blood in the Bible? True Christianity is a very bloody religion.

The Passover drilled into Israel the crimson truth that only the blood of an unblemished, male lamb had the power to protect the men and women from the judgment of Almighty God.

Note that blood splattering on the door posts formed the sign of the cross like the sign of the cross over the heart practiced by devout Catholics -- a sacred custom devout Protestants would do well to restore.

The blood on the door posts meant that everyone in the house was purchased with blood currency, redeemed to God, and taken off death row (judgment). The lamb and its blood on the doorpost was sufficient to save everyone in the house (12:4), just as the Lamb of God is sufficient to save everyone who trusts in Him. Like the blood on the doorpost protected everyone within from the death angel, the blood-marked believer is protected from the wrath to come ([1 Thessalonian 5:9](#)).

Though hearts may have trembled and knees buckled as they heard the death screams during the night, those under the blood were safe. Oh, to believe this and to enjoy the benefits of our Lord's salvation! Blood makes us safe. Faith makes us rest in peace.

“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (12:8).

As Israel ate the Passover Lamb, Christians are strengthened by ruminating on the wonders of Christ and the glories of His accomplishments.

How much of the lamb could the individual Israelite eat? It all depended on the hunger of the person. Likewise, today. How much a person learns about Christ *depends on his spiritual appetite*. The Lamb is never too small, but the people's hunger for Him may be too little. Beware of what you desire, for you will become the sum total of your hungers.

Generally speaking, there is nothing more painful than third-degree burns. As Israel roasted the lamb, let us never forget that our Savior felt the full outpouring of the blistering, sizzling, thermal wrath of God for our sins at the cross.

As the Passover meal was eaten with unleaven bread (the matstsah), only those who repent of their sins and reject the leaven of this world can enjoy fellowship with the Son. Leaven is an appropriate symbol for sin and its synergy among men. Those who seek fellowship with the Lord must throw out the leaven and focus their joys on the delights found in the kingdom of God.

In commemorating the Passover, the LORD instructed His people to do a "spring cleaning" and to purge all leaven out of their homes before they celebrated the Passover Festival (12:19-20) -- a lesson on the necessity of Christians identifying sin and forsaking it on a weekly basis so they do not partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner ([1 Corinthians 11:28-29](#)).

American Christians like to boast about what they gained in becoming a Christian, but few talk about what they lost when they believed in Christ. True Christianity involves loses of all leaven (the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the love of the world).

In contrast to other sacrifices which either a part or whole was burned or offered to God, the whole Passover lamb, excepting the blood, was to eaten by the people; that is, each family member could enjoy as much of the Passover lamb as he desired. Barnes adds this perspective:

“Our Lord was offered and His blood shed as an expiatory and propitiatory sacrifice, but His whole Humanity is transfused spiritually and effectually into His Church, an effect which is at once symbolized and assured in holy communion, the Christian Passover.”

As Israel ate the Passover with bitter herbs (maror) to reflect on the bitterness of slavery and Egypt, believers celebrate the Lord's Supper reflecting on the bitterness that sin causes humanity.

“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance (intestines) thereof” (12:9):

God designed the Passover feast to be a delightful family meal as a pedagogic tool to educate family members about the wonders of redemption.

God instructed the redeemed not to eat a half-roasted lamb or one boiled in a pot of water.

The lesson for Christians is that communion with Christ involves exploration of cross and the intense suffering our Lord had to go through in order to obtain salvation for his people. He did not die half-way, nor was He given an anesthetic to reduce His pain at the cross. Who can fully appreciate the bitter spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical agony the holy Savior endured as the sin-bearer at the old rugged cross?

I am reminded of the farmer who went to his farm animals seeking a donation for a ham and egg breakfasts for his friends. The farmer went to a hen and asked her to donate some eggs. She did. When he came to the pig, the pig said, "Mr. Farmer, it was nice of the chicken to donate her eggs for your breakfast, but for me the commitment means total sacrifice!"

Jesus did not donate anything to salvation, He made a total sacrifice to save you and me.

God instructed the people to eat the whole lamb for strength in the journey ahead. Likewise, we need to ruminate on all the wonders of Christ and the glories of His redemption in order to endure the Pilgrim journey across Jordan's River to the City of God.

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover (peccah)” (12:10):

“loins girded” and “shoes on the feet” and “staff in hand” refers to Israel's readiness to walk out of Egypt with their bags packed. Redemption is God's "ticket out of Dodge" sort of speak; Redeemed, the pilgrim Christians makes his exit out of Sodom and Gomorrah, out of the world, away from the Poisonous Tree. He leaves the island of chains and shackles on a journey to the Promise Land by faith in His Redeemer (Colossians 1:13-14).

“eat it in haste:” The Christian journey is hard; the path narrow; and the crossing difficult. What will sustain the weary pilgrim? The strength for this departure from slave masters in Egypt toward freedom in Christ comes from "eating" the Passover lamb -- imagery of ruminating on, and remembering the wonders of Christ and His accomplishments at Calvary.

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD” (12:12):

As the Passover meant salvation for Israel and judgment for the Egyptians, the cross of Christ announces redemption for the believer and condemnation for the Christ-rejecter (John 3:36).

When the LORD executed judgment on Egypt and saw the blood on the doorposts, He passed over those under the blood. But, he took the life of the firstborn in every home that relied on their false gods to protect them. The Passover is not only a lesson on salvation by blood, but a lesson on the tragedy of false religions and their false hopes.

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (12:13):

The emphasis on blood informs us that blood is the currency of the spirit world, the tender for redemption from sin and death.

There are only two religions: the religion of Cain who sought to purchase salvation with beans, beat, and broccoli, and Abel who redeemed his soul with blood.

Of what interest are corn and tomatoes, silver and gold, to a holy Spirit? Christianity treasures the blood of Christ as it insists that salvation is not by human works, but due to our Lord shedding His precious blood at Calvary ([1 Peter 1:18-19](#)).

"And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever" (12:21):

The command of the LORD to the "Congregation of Israel" (12:3) commemorating the Passover / exodus (12:21) typified the Lord's command to His people regarding the Lord's Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me."

The rest of this chapter contains profitable instructions about how Israel was to institutionalize the Passover Feast to commemorate God's protection of those under the blood, and their journey out of Egypt.

Thus, the Passover secured the nation's protection from God's judgment on Egypt. It prepared the nation to receive the wonders of the True Passover Lamb and the glories of His accomplishments at Calvary.

45. THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF CHRIST

Hebrews 13:13 Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.

The term “excommunication” means to “disassociate.”

It is an ecclesiastic term referring to the church discipline of erring members—communicants that profess to know Christ but deny him by their willful violation of the Ten Commandments.

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 . . . I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler— not even to eat with such a one.

However, our Lord Who “did no sin” (1 Peter 2: 22), “knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5: 21), and “had no sin” (1 John 3:5) was excommunicated. The flower among thorns Who “offered himself spotless to God” (Hebrews 9: 14) was not welcome by the establishment.

The Scripture predicted that this Righteous One would be “despised and rejected” by men (Isaiah 53:3).

The Jesus that most of us have come to admire was actually excommunicated from cities, synagogues, and eventually by the Great Sanhedrin. His rejection by men is not so much a reflection on His character, but a spotlight on man’s wretched condition.

With a heart harder than a petrified forest, Herod ordered his soldiers to slaughter all the babies around Bethlehem hoping Christ would be among them (Matthew 2).

Totally invested in external, traditional Jewish religion, the synagogue congregation in Nazareth excommunicated Christ for his claim to be the Messiah, and then attempted to push him over the nearest cliff (Luke 4:29).

Stunned by the loss of their swine corporation, and shocked at seeing the demoniac clothed and in his right mind, the villagers at Genesaret “began to beg Jesus to depart from their region” (Mark 5:17); that is, they fired him and excommunicated him from their association.

Baffled by the meaning of our Lord’s Bread of Life Discourse and unable to digest the spiritual meaning of what it means to “eat his flesh” and “drink of his blood,” “many of his disciples withdrew” and stopped walking with him (John 6:66).

Angry that Jesus called himself the “light of the world,” (John 8:12) and taking umbrage at his statement that they were murderers and liars serving their father the Devil (8:44), the Jewish Sanhedrin searched for rocks to stone Jesus (8:59). They excommunicated him and wanted to break every bone in his body.

Forthwith, our Lord calmly walked outside the temple gates where he saw a blind man begging for alms. Moved with compassion, He healed the man of his blindness proving that He was indeed the light of the world.

Shortly, thereafter, the text says the Jews “put him (the form blind man) out of the synagogue” (9:22) where Jesus was not welcome

The Jews had three types of synagogue disciplines:

1. *Neziphah*: a man is rebuked and shunned for seven days.
2. *Nuddui*: A man is rebuked, cursed, and denounced with a blast of ram’s horns, followed by shunning for 20 days.
3. *Cherim*: A man is treated as dead and no social interaction with the man is permitted by members of the synagogue. The problem, of course, is not only were Jews members of the synagogue, they were members of the community. Rejection in the synagogue and in the market place proved very burdensome.

Within hours, the former blind man was given the right fist of fellowship and booted out of the synagogue by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem; that is, the bewildered and innocent young man experienced the *cherim*, the full venom and disciplinary action of the religious leaders.

Providentially, the Lord found the healed man and revealed Himself to him as the Christ of God. Thus, the blind man was not only physically healed, but spiritually restored.

A reading of the rest of John shows us how the cold, calculating Jews not only hated Jesus, but despised him. Falsely charging him with tax evasion and treason to Caesar, they arraigned him in their midnight kangaroo court and with barratry delivered a guilty verdict. Brought before Pilate in a Roman forum, he was condemned to death. Binding him to a cross, they hauled him outside the city and crucified Him.

The following lessons come to mind:

First, this account tells us something about the heart of men generally and the heart of Jews specifically.

If they detested the perfect Christ, they will hate and despise His imperfect followers. If they excommunicated our Lord, they will shun you, reject you, isolate you, fire you, fine you, sue you, and even try to hurt you . . . if you are truly seeking to follow Christ with cross in hand.

Second, the Jews hated our Lord because he did not support the religious establishment and their legalistic religion.

Jesus was not Jewish in the religious sense of the term. He was not only politically incorrect, they couldn't control him . . . and, this made Christ the most dangerous man in Israel. He was an outsider, and not an insider. He sought truth when they were seeking power. Because he didn't support the status quo, He had to go.

The more accurately you follow Christ and the closer you get to practicing true Christianity, the more politically incorrect you will become. The more sincere and genuine you are, the more uncomfortable and agitated Lollipop Christians become. If you take up your cross and begin to challenge the hypocrisies of established religion, you may find yourself knocking on church doors trying to get in. Jesus did (Revelation 3:20).

Further, when establishment people in 501 c 3 organizations want to be right with government, you cannot expect them not to betray you. When government is god in the minds of Christians, they will automatically do what they think will please the State even if that means deserting you.

In today's political / spiritual climate, it is just not possible to follow Christ and not find yourself the target of "church" animus or the victim of an overreaching police State.

By way of illustration see Amos 5:21 wherein God despised religious services in their congregational meetings; and, Amos 5:10-13 where the apostate priest of Bethel excommunicated Amos from the King's Chapel – that is, the government created, government owned, government controlled State religion.

Third, our Lord was crucified "outside the camp," and if you want to walk with Him, you will have to go to Him outside the camp.

You simply cannot find true Christianity in establishment, entertainment, seeker-friendly, politically correct, government owned, commercial-centered, guitar-jamming, IRS ruled 501 c 3 non-prophet organizations.

Yes, you can hear a good message from time to time, but these organizations are non-profitable corporations with no soul and no conscience. The leadership is more interesting in preserving power and growing the "church" as a business, than it is in following Him who was despised and rejected by men.

Inside these organizations you will find Caramel Christians who have turned to soggy mush playing *Patty Cake*, singing *Kumbaya* to each other, and shaking booty in the aisle under the spell of an electric guitar.

You won't find salty Christians who eat Iron-man Wheaties for breakfast (God's Word), who despise baby killing at abortion clinics and strongly object to government policies that promote Islam, same-sex-marriages, radical feminism, and racial diversity in the name of multiculturalism and compassion in traditional churches.

If you want to find the Rose of Sharon, the Lilly of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star, you will have to go outside the camp.

46. IMPORTANCE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

*Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with **blood**; and without shedding of **blood** is no remission.*

Blood is the currency of the spirit-world.

The difference between Talmudic Judaism, Islam, the pantheistic cults, and Christianity is that Christianity teaches that blood, not good deeds, is the currency that must be paid to redeem the soul.

Christianity is a bloody religion through and through. In ancient Israel, blood flowed like a river from the temple into the Kidron Valley. Hundreds of thousands of lambs, birds, goats, and bulls spilled their blood at the site.

From the animals killed to provide clothing for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) to the death of Christ (John 18-19), the Scripture teaches one fundamental truth: Blood must be shed to pay for sin! Blood must be on the altar to gain acceptance before the God of the Bible. God is just, and He cannot ignore, whitewash, avoid, overlook, or turn a blind eye to transgressions against His law. Blood is the only currency received by the Great Spirit in exchange for the soul.

Modern man with his love of money and psychological gimmicks fall short of achieving his spiritual ambitions because he fails to grasp that blood is the only lawful tender accepted between spirits and mortals.

Humanly speaking, blood is a powerful subject.

There is something in all of us that causes us to react to blood. The sight of that bright red fluid -- whether it was coming from an enemy or friend, a prey or yourself -- provokes fear and awe. Hemophobia is the fear of blood. Blood is associated with such powerful concepts that some people can't stand the sight of it. Many faint at the sight of a bloody scene.

Blood is life. Blood is power and vitality—when you push yourself, your heart pounds and your pulse races as your blood rushes to supply oxygen to exhausted cells. A woman bleeds during her menstrual cycle, there's blood at childbirth. A drop of blood is your human signature. Your blood contains DNA and not only identifies your individual characteristics, but your entire family history. If you donate blood you might be saving someone's life. Blood banks are the first aid of life. Transfusions save lives.

Genesis 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood:

Even in the French Quarter of New Orleans where Voodoo Queens practice love spells and curses, necromancers understand that to summon the gods of the underworld, blood must be mixed with frog hairs and toenails to attract the spirits.

Blood magic is the use of a few drops of blood, usually your own, to summon the gods of power. Even ancient Egyptians understood that mediation between the goat-gods and man required blood—lots of blood. Drinking blood, washing in blood, and sprinkling blood on symbolic objects guaranteed the Grand Zombi access to demonic powers.

Blood is associated with death on the battlefield, the slaughter of animals, cycles of fertility, and pagan rituals wherein occultist bath in blood or offer blood up to spirits of power.

But, mankind seems oblivious to the necessity of blood redemption.

The only legal tender Americans understand are worthless FRNs and Citibank Credit Cards. “Money” is the American religion. After all, every dollar boasts it is backed by “the full **faith** and credit” of the U.S. government--a bankrupt corporation at that! To Americans, FRNs can buy anything, even favors with God. In love with gold-platinum credit cards, BMWs, and dollar bills, the average U.S. citizen hopes to gain power by spending himself into debt, by devoting himself to yoga exercises, and by using psychedelic drugs to engage the spirit world.

In the month of May 2018, Breitbart News reported that people were leaving Illinois in droves because of high taxes. “So, how is the state’s legislature reacting to the tens of thousands of constituents leaving every year over high taxes? Well, legislators are [proposing](#) a massive tax hike, naturally.”

Even in the Christian community, people pray the rosary, offer money in exchange for spiritual favors, and practice oil anointing in hopes of contracting for power in the spirit world. But, why would a spirit be interested in gold or silver or those worthless green FRNs with pictures of dead presidents?

When will Americans wake up and realize that blood is the currency of the spirit world; that only by blood can men escape the penalties of their naked arrogance, shameful lusts, and outbursts of anger?

Gold and silver are of no interest to the Eternal Spirit . . . but blood?

The Great Spirit is attracted to blood . . . the blood of Abel's lamb . . . and the shed blood of Abel . . . and most importantly, the blood of Christ.

Notice that blood speaks to the Almighty; that blood is of utmost interest to the Judge of all men; that blood speaks a message.

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

Hebrews 12:24 "the blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel."

The blood of Abel's lamb cried out for pardon; the blood of Abel cried out for vengeance upon his murderer. The blood of Christ cries out "forgiveness" for trusting sinners.

Which raises the question: How can a transgressor appease the offended Spirit he has neglected all his life? How can a proud miscreant who has plunged into sensuality, fornication, and abominable idolatries be reconciled with his Creator?

The Bible from beginning to the end drills in one truth. Blood has to be brought to the bargaining table. Blood is the only currency recognized in the spirit world. Blood is the only consideration accepted for a contract. The rituals of religion won't do. Feeling sorry for your wicked deeds can't buy spit. Saying "I'm sorry" to an offended Spirit will get you thrown into hell.

Cain was a farmer. Cain's offered vegetables to God and was rejected. Abel was a shepherd. Abel offered the blood of a lamb and found acceptance (Genesis 4).

From this account we learn there are only two religions in the world--(1) the religion of beans, beets, and broccoli--a religion of works; and (2) the religion of blood redemption. Judaism, Islam, and the pantheistic faiths are based on the belief that one's good deeds commend a man to God; that is, they follow the way of Cain and practice a vegetable religion. Christianity is based on the blood sacrifice of the Son of which all the Levitical sacrifices are a type.

The only tender accepted for ransom is blood . . . and a very special kind of blood--innocent blood, pure blood, sinless blood! Is there such a rare treasure as this? Yes, there is!

In His grace and mercy, the great Spirit offered the blood of His Son as currency for redemption: "knowing that you were ransomed from the corruptible ways inherited from your forefathers, not with worthless things like silver and gold, **but with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or defect"- 1 Peter 1:19.

Therefore, if you are trusting in your miserable money or worthless religious rituals or feeble beliefs that you are not that bad of a person flee to the cross and lay hold of the horns on the altar. Plead the blood of Christ might be applied as payment for your sins. "Under stand" ("stand under") the blood of Christ and its authority. It is the only currency accepted in the spirit world.

This is our gospel.

47. MERCY, ALLAH, AND JESUS CHRIST

Fred called me on the phone alerting me to the Methodists who were turning their churches into virtual mosques: (<http://www.infowars.com/methodist-churches-converting-to-virtual-mosques-for-muslim-migrants/>)

We talked. Their theology appeared to be a strange mixture of honey and arsenic, benzos and venom.

These Methodist left-coasters didn't understand the most fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity. Apparently, they'd been drinking the Christmas kool-aid of pinko, eco-wacho, one-world, equality religionists.

We couldn't stand it! Here is our article on the difference between Islam and Christianity –the difference between swimming in a puddle on the side walk, and swimming in the deep, blue sea.

It is the difference between Santa Clause and the gospel of Jesus Christ

It is the difference between vegetables and BLOOD!

Islam teaches that the god Allah is merciful.

In the Hadithi Qudsi, Allah tells man of the greatness of His forgiveness and mercy so that no one would despair due to the amount of sins he may have committed. This claim is supported by the following verse in the Quran:

“Say: O My servants who have transgressed against their own souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surah az-Zumar 39:53)

“When supplicating, one should truly seek Allahs aid and His forgiveness and demonstrate his need for Allah and submit to Him with fear and hope in receiving the desired response. Allah advises in Surat al-Araaf 7:56: And invoke Him in fear and aspiration (of hope). Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good.”

Likewise, Christianity teaches that God is merciful.

Psalm 103:11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Psalm 100:5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

But there is a BIG difference between the mercy of Allah, and the mercy of the LORD God of the Bible.

Consider the following differences:

First, the mercy of the god Allah is based on emotion.

Muslims teach that Allah is full of mercy; that his heart is tide pool of goodness waiting to be poured on good people; that is, his mercy is touchy-feely, subjective mumbo-jumbo and excessively so.

Allah's mercy is like giving a dog a bath. Everyone gets splashed with water depending on how much the dog wiggles in the tub.

Moreover, Allah's mercy is not only dependent on how Allah feels on a given day, it is dependent on how good you are; that is, whether you are naughty or nice. Like Santa Clause you'd better be good for goodness sake or you're not going to get sugar plumbs after Ramadan.

So, if you want hugs and kisses from Allah, be good . . . real good!

But, the god of the Koran is not the same as the God of Holy Scripture. We must distinguish between the two as one discriminates be fact and fiction.

Second, mercy is part of the LORD God's character, and closely associated with His attribute of justice.

Psalm 89:14 Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

Third, God's mercy is based on the satisfaction of His justice and is illustrated by the picture of propitiation that took place on the mercy seat in the Tabernacle.

Leviticus 16:14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish (uphold) the law.

The mercy seat was the gold lid on the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:17–22), called the *kapporet* in Hebrew. Above the ark were molded, golden cherubim. It is typified as God's throne as well as an altar.

The LORD God wants to be merciful, but how can He be merciful to lawbreakers?

How can He show mercy until the claims of Divine justice have been satisfied?

The Bible teaches the “soul that sinneth, it shall die” — Ezekiel 18:20.

In His grace, YHWH ordered His people to kill a sacrificial animal as a substitute for the death of sinners, pour its blood into a bowl, and to sprinkle it on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. This was done once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement . . . and blood was shed daily through the people's sin offerings. Thus, the Kidron Valley flowed with blood — blood shed for the sins of the people.

God demands blood for the payment of sin, not silver and gold. What value is precious metals to a Spirit Being? (1 Peter 1:18, 19)

Christianity is a grim, ghastly, bloody religion. Millions of sheep, goats, and bulls were slaughtered on the Temple mount because He demanded the macabre price of blood.

With blood on the altar, God can show mercy to men. Blood is the basis of His mercy, not the goodness of men.

Fourth, with blood on the mercy seat God's just character was satisfied (propitiated), and therefore He could now show mercy to His people.

Blood is the currency of the spirit world, and with blood on the altar, the Great Spirit could act mercifully toward sinners. With sins paid for in blood currency, God could bless His people even though they had been “naughty and not nice.”

Notice how peace and mercy are connected to the “blood on the cross.”

Colossians 1:2. 20 ” . . . Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself . . . “

Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

John Calvin had this to say about the mercy seat:

“God was propitiated towards believers by the covering of the Law, so as to shew Himself favorable to them by hearing their vows and prayers. For as long as the law stands forth before God’s face it subjects us to His wrath and curse; and hence it is necessary that the blotting out of our guilt should be interposed, so that God may be reconciled with us.”

It is even better than this! The *kapporet* was two cubits long and a cubit and half wide. But, the height of the mercy seat was not so delineated. Why was there no measurement given to define the thickness or height of the *kapporet*? Possibly, because God is telling us there is no limit to His mercy.

So powerful is blood atonement, God could show mercy toward His people even though their transgressions stacked high into the heavens; that is God’s mercy is greater and higher than any of man’s sins.

Psalm 108:4 For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.

Fifth, Jesus Christ is God’s mercy seat.

In reality, the blood of animals could not ultimately satisfy the claims of God’s law upon men.

God so loved the world that He sent His Son to be the *kapporet* and to shed His precious blood for the sins of men at the cross that whosoever believes in Him should not perish by the claims of Divine justice upon him.

*“For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” —
Hebrews 9:13–14*

Blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat to illustrate to man that Divine justice demands payment for sins in blood. The gospel teaches us that only the blood of Jesus can propitiate a holy God

and cleanse the soul. He alone can turn away the wrath of the Court. He alone is our propitiation. He alone is our MERCY SEAT (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

And, this is the difference between Christianity and Islam. Allah's mercy is subjective based on his personal feelings, tastes, and opinions about how good you are. In Christianity, God's mercy is showered on men, but because His justice has been satisfied by Christ. With His character secure, He acts mercifully toward believers not because they are good, but because His Son is good . . . and became their MERCY SEAT!

Finally, Islam is no different than all the “Santa Clause” religions of the world that teach salvation by works — that God is merciful to those who are good.

You better watch out, you better not cry
Better not pout, I'm telling you why
Santa Claus is comin' to town
He's making a list and checking it twice
Gonna find out who's naughty and nice
Santa Claus is comin' to town
He sees you when you're sleepin'
He knows when you're a wake
He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness sake . . .!

Like Cain, Muslims offer vegetables (good works) to Allah . . . but Christianity? Like Abel, believers rely on blood to secure their redemption.

*1 Peter 1:2 “. . . unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:
Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

*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.*

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

So, if you want to swim in the deep blue sea of God's mercy, get to know His MERCY SEAT . . . and avoid “naughty or nice” theologies!

So, this Christmas season, let us remember the color red—that it took the pure, holy, innocent red blood of Jesus to secure the mercy of God for us . . . forever!

48. HE TASTED DEATH FOR EVERY MAN

By the Grace of God He tasted death for every man.

A devotion for Good Friday

*Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he **by the grace of God should taste death for every man.***

If you could choose the type of death you were going die, how would you exit this world? Personally, I would choose to die in my sleep or leave in a chariot like Elijah.

But, the choice of where to be born, or when and how to die is not ours! God is sovereign; and, He chooses the day of our death.

However, Christ is very God of God, and He had a choice. He could have ascended into heaven without dying . . . or quietly disappeared . . . or put on a stage production and leave amidst claps and cheers.

The text says that “He might / should taste death for every man.”

He tasted the anxiety and fear of anticipating death;

He tasted the height and depth and breadth of it;

He tasted the piercing pain and panic of it; the agony and anguish of it; and, the horror and terror of death;

He tasted the solemn totality of death;

He tasted the helplessness and hopelessness of dying;

He tasted the darkness and the gloom; the swirling and swallowing of the waves of death;

He tasted the dismay and despair; and, the doubt and dread of death;

He tasted the cruelty and callousness and anger of man in his dying;

In his agony on the cross, He tasted the burning wrath of God!

He tasted the hell of it;

He tasted what it means to be totally and completely separated from his Father;

He tasted the eternal defeat of death; and, because He was a man, He could die the death that belonged to all men; and, because He was God, He could die enough. Selah!

How could he accept? How could He commit? How could He endure the fullness of death upon his shoulders on that cross? The text says, by the grace of God . . .

By the grace of God, He was raised from the dead for our justification; and,

By the grace of God, He was exalted to the right hand of the Father and crowned with glory and honor.

But, notice the subjunctive verb in the text, “that He *might / should* taste (*geusatai*) death for every man.” Why the subjunctive? Because the benefits of His death, burial, and resurrection contain an offer of performance; the benefits of which are based upon acceptance of the offer tendered by the LORD God! Salvation is a gift, but the offer must be accepted. Selah!

Be sure and take a few minutes on this Good Friday to consider . . . and to thank our Lord for his offer to taste death for you.

49. CHRIST THE MODEL SERVANT

“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus” (Acts 3:13).

“ . . . your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed” (Acts 4:27)

“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus” (Acts 3:13).

Unity is a key to effective evangelism!

We cannot do it alone. However, when Christians unite for the purpose of the gospel they increase power.

One of my favorite Peanuts cartoons is when Lucy enters the room and demands that Linus change TV channels and then threatens him with her fist if he does not comply. Linus asks, “What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?” Lucy replies saying, “These five fingers. Individually, they are nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold.” “Which channel do you want?” questions Linus. Turning away, Linus looks at his fingers and asks, “Why can’t you guys get organized like that?”

I have asked myself that same question about churches: “Why can’t you guys get organized like that?”

It seems that something is always eating away at Christian unity. Like termites devouring the foundation of a home, self-interest seems to erode the unity of the church.

Tony Evans, a Bible preacher, has told about his experience of visiting a mental hospital. He noticed there was only one supervisor overseeing 100 interns in the plaza. Tony asked his guide, “Aren’t you worried the interns might rally and overcome the attendant?” “No,” responded the guide, “Crazy people don’t unite.”

His understanding of insanity was profound. Likewise, we must be crazy-whacko if we do not unite to get the gospel out to a lost and dying world. But, what can unite us?

In the book of Romans, the Jews and Gentiles found themselves divided over dietary laws Jewish customs (Romans 14). Paul sought to unite the conglomerate church around the marvelous

example of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted them to “accept one another” and he sought to motivate them by three examples of Christ:

You can be a unifier in the household of God by following these three examples of Christ.

FIRST EXAMPLE: CHRIST DID NOT LIVE TO PLEASE HIMSELF.

Romans 15:2-3 Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself. . .

Think of all the ways our Lord did not please Himself.

- He did not please Himself when he left the glories of heaven to suffer indignities on earth. He was born in stable, not a sterile hospital room.
- His first bed was a trough, not a beautiful, plush bassinet.
- His parents were not wealthy, but poor, humble peasants. He was circumcised on the 8th day. What man in his right mind, if he had a choice, would submit to such mutilation of the flesh?
- Jesus did not live in Jerusalem, Israel’s greatest city, but Nazareth. (Can anything good come out of Nazareth?)
- He submitted to the inconvenience of water baptism.
- He could have served in any age. He could have enjoyed the comfort of Reebok Tennis Shoes, the luxury of a Ford Taurus, or the refreshment of a Cherry Limeade Punch from a 7-11 store. But, he lived in an age when sandals were the only footwear; walking was the main means of transportation, and watered-down wine was the only drink of the day. Our Lord never enjoyed clam chowder, ham sandwiches, or a dinner at Red Lobster. He ate only kosher food.

It is at his death we see His most selfless act.

I have often thought how I want to die—hopefully, suddenly without any pain or suffering. Jesus, however, submitted to the most cruel, painful death known to man. Why? Because . . . He came not to please Himself, but to please His Heavenly Father.

Consider the following:

- He who was infinite became a single, human cell.

- He who was omnipotent became weak as a baby.
- He who was Creator became a creature.
- He who was Spirit became flesh.
- He who was Eternal became subject to time.
- He who is Light entered the world of darkness.
- He who was omniscient had to learn obedience.
- He who inhabited the Holy of Holies, tabernacled among sinners.
- He who was immutable lived in world of change.
- He who was self-sufficient became dependent on parents.
- He who was Sovereign became a servant.
- He who was clothed with majesty was wrapped in swaddling clothes.
- He who could command stone to be made bread went 40 days without food.
- He who was omnipresent walked step by step from place to place.
- He who was nothing but love experienced nothing but hate.
- He who was honored by angels was dishonored among men.
- He who was Life was subject to death.
- He who could do all things would not come down from the cross.
- He who could please himself chose not to please himself that you and I might have life.

There would be nothing but unity in the church if all of us would seek not to please ourselves.

There was a committee assigned to a ministry task. When the team failed to get the project off the ground, the chairman dismissed the meeting and asked everyone to go home and spend a week in prayer about the project. When they came back, the chairman asked for discussion on the project. One man spoke up and said, "There is no need for more discussion. God spoke to

me. I have been stubborn wanting my own way in this ministry. Let's get this project rolling." They did.

SECOND EXAMPLE: HE RECEIVED US.

Romans 15:7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

The Romans were having an ethnic, cultural conflict in the church. Such diversity among Jews and Gentiles was difficult to manage. "Receive" one another is an imperative. It was a relational, social obligation. Paul did not give the Romans the option of who they were going to love. Paul was saying, if you can't be near those you love, love those you are near.

Paul sought to motivate the believers based on Christ's reception of us. Think of what some of us were. We were immoral pagans: arrogant, selfish, and sensual. Yet Christ received us when we believed. We were fornicators, adulterers, drunkards caring nothing for the things of God. Yet, Christ received us when we believed.

Paul was not asking believers to tolerate evil or to compromise principle. As Dorothy Sayers observed, "In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair, the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die." (Charles Colson, Against the Night, p. 93).

Paul simply asked the believers to receive one another on the same basis that Christ receives us—by faith. If you have repented of your sins and believed in Christ, and I have repented of my sins and believed in Christ, we share common life. This, not cultural homogeneity, is the basis for our fellowship.

There's a wonderful story about Jimmy Durante, one of the great entertainers of the 30's, 40's, and 50's. He was asked to be a part of a show for World War II veterans. He told them his schedule was very busy and he could afford only a few minutes, but if they wouldn't mind his doing one short monologue and immediately leaving for his next appointment, he would come. Of course, the show's director happily agreed. But when Jimmy got on stage, something interesting happened. He went through the short monologue and then stayed. The applause grew louder and louder and he kept staying. Pretty soon, he had been on fifteen, twenty, then thirty minutes. Finally, He took a final bow and left the stage. Backstage someone stopped him and said, "I thought you had to go after a few minutes. What happened?"

Jimmy answered, "I did have to go, but I can show you the reason I stayed. You can see for yourself if you'll look down on the front row." In the front row were two men, each of whom had

lost an arm in the war. One had lost his right arm and the other had lost his left. Together, they were able to clap, and that's exactly what they were doing, loudly and cheerfully (Tim Hansel, Holy Sweat, 1987, Word Books Publisher, p. 104-105).

Despite our handicaps, Christ has received us. If we will unite, we can clap together to glorify Christ.

THIRD EXAMPLE: CHRIST SERVED THE JEWS.

Romans 15:8: Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

Remember, Paul is addressing the Jewish-Gentile problem in Rome. The Jews adopted very restricted lifestyles; Romans knew almost nothing about restraint. The Jewish converts had difficulty living with their libertarian brothers. The Gentiles had difficulty living with their constricted brothers. Paul reminds the Gentiles that Christ became a minister of the circumcision. Now, this was not as easy as it sounds. The Jews of Jesus' day were not sweet, cuddly lambs. The Jews "are contrary to all men," said Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:15). Jesus called them "hypocrites"—that is, they were two-faced (Matthew 6:1ff; 23:13). He identified them as having a "cold heart" (Matthew 15:8). Because they were legalistic, they beat people up with their religion stick (Matthew 23:23). Christ labeled them "wicked and adulterous" (Matthew 16:4).

How would you like to be a missionary to stubborn, cold-hearted, narrow-minded, legalistic, wicked adulterers?

At this church, our primary ministry is not to the Jewish community. So, we do not deal with exactly the same problem Paul addressed. Rather, our ministry is to the pagan community. God calls us to minister to the uncircumcision. These people are aloof, distant, independent, proud, arrogant, godless, and sensual. If we are to be effective at our task, we will need to adopt the attitudes of a servant and follow Christ as the model servant.

ILLUSTRATION

Every year in Alaska, there is a 1000-mile dogsled race. Mushers run for money and prestige. But, it commemorates an original "race" performed to save lives.

Back in January of 1926, six-year-old Richard Stanley showed symptoms of diphtheria, signaling the possibility of an outbreak in the small town of Nome. When the boy passed away a day later, Dr. Curtis Welch began immunizing children and adults with an experimental but effective anti-diphtheria serum. But it wasn't long before Dr. Welch's supply ran out, and the nearest serum was in Nenana, Alaska--1000 miles of frozen wilderness away. Amazingly, a group of trappers

and prospectors volunteered to cover the distance with their dog teams! Operating in relays from trading post to trapping station and beyond, one sled started out from Nome while another, carrying the serum, started from Nenana. Oblivious to frostbite, fatigue, and exhaustion, the teamsters mushed relentlessly until, after 144 hours in minus 50-degree winds, the serum was delivered to Nome. As a result, only one other life was lost to the potential epidemic. Their sacrifice had given an entire town the gift of life.

I can't help but think that we can save lives for Christ in our community, if we will unite. We must follow the example of Christ who taught us not to please ourselves, to accept other servants in spite of their weakness, and to work together in our assigned ministry.

Like Lucy, if we can get these guys to unite, we can form a gospel weapon terrible to behold.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for living a selfless life. May the unity of the spirit flow among us as we follow your example of how service. Amen!

50. THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Christianity's great claim with proof of claim.

Acts 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Part 1

Unlike the other great religions of the world which contain unprovable religious claims, Christianity is thoroughly rooted in history – history that is subject to empirical investigation. It's historical claims and facts are subject to investigation.

The gospel is the good news about the fact of Jesus' historical resurrection.

Personally, I shun the word *religion*, and consider myself an unreligious man.

The word *religion* is used in different ways and has many definitions. Most Christians have little use for the term, and rightly so. The *connotation* of the word is associated with bosom subjectivism and man's effort to reach God by his own effort.

The *denotation* of the word *religion* comes from the Latin word *religare* which means "to bind tightly: *re-*, an emphatic term, and *ligare*, "to bind." Hence, religion enslaves men! Yikes! If by "religion," a person means a wretched, subjective system of slavery designed to control men, then I want nothing to do with it!! Islam, Hinduism, and Western religious psycho-therapy are of this sort.

But, there is a generic definition of religion that I can accept and that is true in its purest sense: ***Religion is any system of belief about man's fundamental problem.***

Man's fundamental problem is that *he is going to die.*

Since men will be dead longer than they will live, men have proposed ideas about an *afterlife*. Death is the big unknown. In this sense, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Reincarnation, Christianity, and Atheism share man's fundamental problem.

Every man then, is religious because every human being has a set of faith propositions about man's origin and man's destiny--a set of beliefs about man's fundamental problem and what to do about it. Every man!

Even atheists are religious because they possess metaphysical beliefs about what happens after death. All possess beliefs about an *afterlife* or *no-afterlife*. **Secular atheism is very religious** because it possesses a very strong set of convictions about what happens after death.

Man's fundamental problem is death!

Is there any tangible, forensic proof that there is a second life, continued existence, a heaven or hell, a nirvana, or an afterlife? Is there any proof the soul dies with the body and there is no such thing as continued existence after death?

What qualifies as "proof?"

When I speak of proof, I am not talking about "analytical proof," or "theoretical proof," or "mathematical proof." I am talking about strict proof . . . legal proof . . . something you can touch, see, hear, and feel.

All religions but one offer convincing theories about an *afterlife*. Hindus propose a view that life is cyclical and advance the proposition of reincarnation. Islam promises a blessed existence for the faithful, even seventy-two virgins for the martyr. Atheism proposes there is no such thing as an *afterlife*! All these views about man's fundamental problem are simply theories, propositions, and proposals. They have no basis in reality.

All law is about "proof of claim." 5 U.S.C. I, 5, II, § 556 states a truth,

"the proponent of a rule or order has the burden of proof" wherein the proponents of a claim are responsible to provide reliable, probative, and substantial evidence and to exclude irrelevant, immaterial, repetitious evidence when advancing a rule or order.

By proof, I mean *synthetic proof, forensic proof, or legal proof*.

When it comes to beliefs about an *afterlife*, I want the kind of proof that I can *see, hear, feel, touch, or taste*. I want proof that will stand up in a court of law against shrewd, aggressive prosecutors. As a juror listening to religious advocates offer evidence about an *afterlife proposition* in the courtroom of life, how am I going to know if there is an afterlife if they do not offer me legal proof? If I cannot see it, hear it, touch it, feel it, or taste it, how am I going to know that it is true?[\[1\]](#)

All religions [including atheism] offer mathematical, analytical propositional theories about what happens after death. None of them can be proved or disproved. For example: Suppose you hear a theory: "God is a force for good and evil and she lives on planet 2009985 in Galaxy 9,784,327." O.K., there is a proposition. How would you prove it or disprove it? It is impossible to do either!

Christianity is completely different than the propositional religions.

In the documents known as the gospels, held in the custody of the early church, eyewitnesses saw, heard, and touched a living, resurrected Christ.

They were not giving us theories about a resurrection. They participated in the event. Convinced that Jesus rose from the dead to solve man's fundamental problem, 100% of the early followers of Christ spent their life proclaiming the good news. In fact, most lived under the imminent threat of death refusing to renounce their testimony. In death, they did not recant!

These witnesses are no longer on the scene of history. But, they left us their eyewitness testimony and the frail objections of hostile witnesses regarding the resurrection event.

Eyewitness testimony is legal, forensic proof because eyewitness testimony is based on what people see, hear, feel, touch, or taste. In the case of Christ, over 500 men witnessed a dead man come back to life (1 Corinthians 15:1-12; John 1:1-4). Here is one account [John 20]:

Part II

JOHN'S RECORD

John 20:1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.

The first day of the week would be Sunday morning. Sunday to a Jew began at 6:00 p.m. Saturday night instead of 12:00 p.m. midnight. Because Christ's body was prepared for burial in haste between 3:00 and 6:00 on Passover evening (Wednesday), Mary and other women came to complete the task of mummification. On the day Christ died (Wednesday), his body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in strips of linen cloth, and carried up the Mount of Olives to a tomb. Inside the tomb, the corpse was washed and then wrapped in several layers of linen soaked in an aloe paste mixed with spices.

On that Sunday morning, Mary led volunteers to complete the encasement of the cadaver while it was still cool before the heat of the day caused the corpse to putrefy and emit unpleasant odors. It had been three long days, and the daunting task of completing the mummification was before them.

When Mary arrived, she noticed the three-thousand-pound wheel-like stone sitting in the granite track. It had been rolled away from the entrance of the man-made cave. When she last visited the tomb, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bullied the stone over the four-foot entrance. What she did not know was that Pilate ordered a clay seal to be placed on the tomb to indicate Rome's seizure of the property, and that he ordered soldiers to stand guard at the site lest any try to steal the mummified corpse. Furthermore, she had no idea the guards ran for their lives sometime on Saturday night when the stone was rolled away. This they would learn later.

THE EXPERIENCE OF PETER AND JOHN

Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him [John 20:2].

Apparently, Mary looked in, saw the body was missing, and assumed the cadaver had been stolen. Fleeing as fast as her feet could stomp, Mary rushed to report the news to Peter and John.

Peter and that other disciple rushed to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple (John) did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed [John 20:3-8].

Immediately, Peter and John raced to the tomb. Being younger, John arrived first. Leery about entering tombs, John just peeked inside. Huffing and puffing, Peter arrived.

When Peter and John entered the site, they did not see an empty tomb!! What they saw was the unfinished, collapsed, mummified encasement and the isolated headpiece which had rolled down hill into a corner.

If the body had been stolen or transferred to another location, the grave robbers would have picked up the whole mummy and left the tomb completely empty.

If the body had been resuscitated, and by some miracle Jesus' was able to wiggle out of the mummified encasement, Peter and John would have seen strips of aloe-soaked, blood-stained wrappings strewn all over the cave and around the plot.

They saw none of this!

What they saw was a completely intact, collapsed, mummified encasement, and the isolated headpiece rolled in a corner.

What happened?

On Saturday night, Jesus' body was raised from the dead. His resurrected body passed through the encasement without disturbance causing it to collapse by the forces of gravity. His headpiece also impacted by gravity rolled to the side.

When the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb, the clay seal was broken and the soldiers, as frightened as teenagers in a haunted house, split the scene as fast as their sandals could slap.

In the morning, Mary arrived and saw the stone rolled away. The stone was rolled away, not to let Jesus out, but to let people in to see, touch, and feel the perfectly intact, collapsed mummified encasement. They witnessed forensic evidence the body was not stolen and that the Jesus had not merely resuscitated and escaped to an unknown location.

None of the disciples saw the resurrection! Rather, they participated in the historical event.

THE EXPERIENCE OF MARY MAGDALENE

And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God [John 20:14-17].

When Mary saw the resurrected Christ, she supposed him to be the gardener. When Jesus said to her, “Mary,” Mary immediately recognized Jesus’ voice. She heard the “corpse” speak, but it wasn’t a corpse. It was the risen Savior!

Astounded and delighted, she threw herself at his feet and grasps him as if she was never going to let him go. “Raboni,” [master], she exclaimed! Her arms did not pass through the image. She touched and felt a real, live being, the resurrected body of Jesus. Jesus spoke to her again in a gentle, comforting way. He explained to her that He was not going to ascend into heaven to be with his Father on this day. Having seen and heard and touched Christ, Mary hurried to inform the bewildered disciples.

Interestingly, a woman was first to see the resurrected Christ.

In Jewish law, a woman’s testimony could not be used in a court of law. If this story was fraudulently fabricated and perpetrated on the naïve, the defrauder would never, never, never include a woman’s testimony in the account, must less solicit a woman as the first eyewitness of the resurrection.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DISCIPLES

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord [John 19-20].

By this time, Mary had seen, heard, and touched the Lord [20:8-18]. Reporting this to the disciples, they were in a quandary about the event. Fearing Mary was hallucinating, but still

clinging to hope, and fearing a governmental investigation, the disciples hovered together in secret.

While they were querying the day's events, Jesus appeared to the frightened men. He did not enter through a door. As his body had so easily passed through the mummified encasement, his body easily passed through the material door blocking entrance into the gathering of men. They saw Jesus. They did not see a phantom, a ghost, a spirit, or a hologram. They *saw* a real, physical, tangible, living being.

They *heard* him speak saying, "Peace be unto you . . ."

"They were glad" was the understatement of ages! These men shook with joy!! Weeks passed before the reality of Easter Sunday settled into a firm conviction that Jesus solved man's fundamental problem.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE THOMAS

The other disciples therefore said unto Thomas, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing [John 20:24-27].

When Thomas heard the report that the disciples *saw* the Lord, he remained unconvinced. Possibly, he thought they were all delusional.

Unfortunately, Thomas has been labeled "Doubting Thomas." But, this is incorrect. Thomas was not a man filled with wretched unbelief. Nor, was Thomas a naïve, gullible, simpleton who could be easily swayed by hallucinating men and delusional women.

Thomas was a realist—a juror, sort of speak, who demanded empirical proof of resurrection. Demanding proof of claim with strict proof of claim, He had to see, to touch, feel, and to hear the resurrected Christ before he could draw a conclusion that the report of a resurrected Christ was indeed true, indisputable fact.

When Christ appeared, Thomas saw, touched, felt, handled, poked, examined, and heard the risen Christ. He did not see a phantom or a spirit, but he saw and touched a real, tangible, squeezable, physically alive body of Christ—a resurrected body.

After Christ appeared to Thomas personally so he could see, hear, and feel the resurrected body of Christ, Thomas announced his verdict, "My Lord and My God!"

If Jesus conquered man's most fundamental problem, then He is God! If he defeated death in time and space, then death is no longer master of man's fate. Jesus is Lord of life. He must be served.

The disciples traveled the Roman world proclaiming what they had seen, touched, and heard. They did not offer men theories about an *afterlife*; they presented forensic evidence to jury of the Mediterranean world that One Man in history conquered death in a visible, tangible, physical, material, corporeal way which we call "the resurrection." They did not offer men "religion," or "duty," or propositions about heaven, but testified, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" [1 John 1:3].

They did not pummel men with religion or chain men to religious duty. **They provided empirical proof that One Man in history solved man's greatest problem!!**

Since this is true, He must be worshiped as Lord and God.

In conclusion, not all religions are the same. All religions but one are metaphysical suppositions about an *afterlife*. Only Christianity follows the rules of evidence offerings strict, historical, legal proof that there is life beyond the grave. Since this is the case, Christianity is the only true religion.

All other religions are false, fake, subjective, illusory, artificial, fictitious, imaginary, nebulous, misleading man-made systems! All of them!

For those who examine the evidence and commit themselves to Christ as "Lord and God," the risen Christ promises to give them the gift of eternal life and to solve their fundamental problem:

*And I give unto them **eternal** life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand [John 10:28].*

This is our hope! This is our gospel. It is claim with proof of claim. We do not ask men to believe the fanciful or even to believe in Christianity, we call men to examine the evidence of a resurrected Christ and to commit to the same.

Part III

Administrative Procedures Act, 5 U.S.C. Part I, Chapter 5, II, § 556 ((d)) Except as otherwise provided by statute, the proponent of a rule or order has the burden of proof.

The proponent of claim has the burden of proof. Christianity is not true because people believe it is true. It is true because its claims are backed by historical, legal, investigable facts.

DIRECT EVIDENCE

Jesus' body lay in the tomb three days and three nights. The confused disciples were scattered. None of them expected a resurrection. Though Jesus spoke of these things, most thought he was speaking parabolically.

Will it stand up in a court of law?

To prove a case in court, the defendant needs primary, direct evidence. **Direct evidence** is firsthand evidence. There are no living witnesses today. That generation has passed from the stage of history, but their testimonies remain. The NT documents record their witness. We have demonstrated that the NT witness is abundant, recorded scientifically, and passes all the tests of the ancient writing rule. We can, therefore, examine their testimony.

You can have confidence that the resurrection is true based on the evidence surviving the cross-examination of eyewitness testimony.

THE TESTIMONY OF EYEWITNESSES

1 The Eyewitnesses:

2 Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

There is a difference between myth and history; fact and fiction.

For example, who is Little Red Riding Hood? Where did she live? When did she live? What country is she from? Did anyone in history know her? None of these questions can be answered affirmatively because Little Red Riding Hood is a myth. However, when we come to the person of Christ, we know when he lived, where he lived, what he did, and we know about the people who knew him.

There is a difference between hearsay and eyewitness testimony; between **analytical evidence** and **synthetic evidence**. Analytical evidence is pure proof or mathematical proof. It works in theory. Synthetic evidence is historical, legal proof—the establishment of fact by use of evidence. Our God is not theoretical. He has entered history in time and space in the person of Christ with many *infallible proofs—proofs required in the courtroom* [Acts 1:3][\[2\]](#).

2 Who were these witnesses?

Matthew: Levi, son of Alphaeus, tax collector, one of the twelve disciples, author of the Book of Matthew—an account of the life of Jesus Christ.

Mark: cousin of Barnabus, assistant to Paul, intimate friend of Peter from whom he received much information about Jesus, and author of the Book of Mark

Luke: doctor, historian, traveling companion of Paul, possibly a Gentile convert, friend of the family of the Latin poet Lucanus; author of Luke and Acts: His description is found in Luke 22-24.

John: Son of Zebedee, brother of James, fisherman by trade, one of the twelve, one of the inner three, stayed close to Jesus death on the cross, and records his eyewitness testimony.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna.

Two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Ten disciples including all but Judas and Thomas.

Thomas: One of the twelve, the empiricist who insisted on proof of claim.

More than 500 people witnessed the risen Christ.

Saul of Tarsus, adversary and skeptic, persecutor of the church, author of 13 letters in the NT

3 Surviving Evidence

The testimonial accounts vary in minute detail. But all agree [Matthew 27:50, 59, 28:8].

- Jesus was alive.
- Jesus was dead.
- Jesus was alive after His death.

4 Legal Notes

Courts are not interested in possibility, but probability.

Suppose you saw a midget fleeing from a room with a knife in his hand. Looking inside the room you see a dead body. Blood is oozing from his chest. There are no windows or doors in the room other than the one you entered. Though it is possible a Martian killed the man, it isn't probable. The detective would not be interested in a Martian theory, he would want to know all about the midget who fled the scene with a knife in his hand.

The courts are interested in proof beyond reasonable doubt. There is no such thing as absolute certainty, only reasonable certainty. Nothing can be proved beyond all doubt.

Perjury must be attacked. How do you attack perjury? First, attacking either the character of the witness or the facts of his testimony can expose perjury.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence? People can make any faith claim they wish, but all must ask, "What is the evidence?" We are not interested in hearsay, opinions, propositions, or theories. Like Dagnet, "we want the facts ma'am, just the facts."

5 Evidence Surviving Cross Examination

Prosecution Strategy One: Attack the testimony. *Because the gospel accounts differ in the detail, and because there are omissions in the records, the testimonies can't be trusted.*

Example: Matthew records an earthquake on Easter morning, Mark does not. Mark mentions Salome, Luke does not. Luke mentions the presence of two angels. John does not. John records the investigation of Peter and John. Matthew does not.

Defense: Omissions are not contradictions. Agreement on detail demonstrates collusion, while differences in detail substantiate a true eyewitness account. These differences testify to the honest, but different perspective each witness possessed.

Prosecution Strategy Two: Destroy the credibility of the witnesses.

These men were credulous men and easily deceived.

Defense: Not so. These were ordinary men. Just as we have never seen a resurrection, neither had they. The Gospels record their skepticism. Look at Thomas. He would not believe without empirical, proof. He demanded to see, hear, and touch this "so called" living Christ. These men were not fideists. There is almost no evidence these men were credulous men or fell into the plight of "easy believism."

Prosecution Strategy Three: Destroy the credibility of the witnesses.

These men were dishonest and tried to deceive the public.

Defense: You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence? There is no evidence in the Biblical record were anything but normal, rational, honest men. Their ethical standards were firmly rooted in the Ten Commandments.

The witnesses had no reason not to speak the truth. It would have been easier to lie that the resurrection did not happen than it was to testify that "the impossible" [the resurrection] did happen. Their testimony brought trouble into their lives. They faced persecution, even death. Furthermore, these men were Jews who lived under a strict, high moral code, and they followed Jesus who was a moral teacher. The idea that they were evil, wicked, lying men is contrary to the Biblical record.

Prosecution Strategy Four: Charge them with collusion.

These men colluded together to deceive the public.

Defense: You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence? The differing details in their testimonies indicate that they did not get together and create a story. Their testimonies are filled with historical detail but they are not smooth and polished.

Unity was fragile among the disciples: They were fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, and businessmen. They could not agree in life, much less in death. One has to wonder if they had the capacity to agree on anything. However, they did agree on history's most amazing event because each saw the living Christ.

Prosecution Strategy Five: Attack the credibility of the women.

There were women witnesses, and women in those days were not permitted to offer testimony in a court of law.

Defense: No Jew, seeking to delude the public, would ever include the testimony of women in his evidence. In Jewish eyes, women could not be trusted as witnesses in a court of law. Even Paul, the rabbi, did not include women in his defense of the resurrection [1 Corinthians 15:1-12].

However, these men simply called it as they saw it. Thus, the gospel writers included women in the list of witnesses because this is the way it happened. Women bore witness to what they saw.

Prosecution Strategy Six: Charge the Biblical witnesses with making up a story.

The apostles manufactured a testimony to establish a new religion and to gain for themselves a place in history.

Defense: These men were not "religious masochists." So hostile was the vanguard of Judaism, these men faced arrest, torture, excommunication, loss of family, and execution for their testimony. Imagine a discussion of the disciples: "Fella's, I know we are going to lose our families, our fortunes, our country, and our lives. We will probably be beat and bruised, tarred and feathered, beheaded and crucified for this lie, but let's go ahead and do it anyway." This would be nonsense.

Consider the presence of hostile witnesses: If these men had varied from the truth, the ruling elite, being highly motivated, would have gladly pointed out the inconsistency in their message. But, there is a strange silence from these opponents. Strangely missing in the first century is any presentment of counter testimony and inculpatory evidence by hostile witnesses.

The disciples couldn't afford to risk inadequacies. "We are witnesses of these things," said the apostles [Acts 5:32]. They witnesses to what they saw, and the hostile leaders offered no evidence to the contrary.

There is a story of Sherlock Homes and the Barking dog. When Watson asked Sherlock how he solved the crime, Homes remarked, "It was the silence of barking dog that told me who the murderer was." Homes reasoned that the dog always barked when strangers came near the house. On the night of the murder, the dog did not bark. The silence of the dog alerted Homes that the murderer must have been a family member with whom the dog was well acquainted. The silence of the Pharisees about the resurrection is amazing. Why didn't these hostile witnesses bring forth evidence of a stolen corpse? Why didn't they produce a body? Why didn't they bring forth witnesses regarding a thief?

Look at present day media and the "Shark attack" that occur when a politician slips up. They become shark bait.

If the disciples respected Christ so much and stole the body, you would think they would have buried the body and set up a memorial for him so his followers could make visits to the site. But, they could not do this because there was no body to bury.

6 Evidence Surviving Prosecution: All claims must be cross-examined! And, the apostle's claims were not only survived interrogation, their claims prevailed in the minds of the jury in the Roman Theater.

- Jesus was alive
- Jesus died and was buried.
- Jesus was alive after the resurrection

PART III

COUNTERCLAIMS

Testimony of Hostile Witnesses of the 21st Millennium: Many existed, and Luke and others had opportunity to interview them. Who could prove Jesus was dead? Where was the body located?

Counterclaim No. 1: Jesus swooned, or the disciples thought they saw a resurrected Christ.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

"Damp tomb" is not a cure for crucifixion. How would a severely wounded man move a 3000-pound rock, tippy-toe past the soldiers, and escape to a secret location during Passover with a swarm of pilgrims camping all around Jerusalem and on the Mount of Olives? This claim is more incredible than the resurrection.

Counterclaim No. 2: The disciples stole the body.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Their lives were in danger. Why would they steal a body? A Roman guard would have to be overcome by force. The records reveal the apostles weren't expecting a resurrection. What could possibly be their motivation? What did they do with the body? How did they keep the secret under threat of life? How did they deceive the public? It takes greater faith to believe this than it does the resurrection.

Counterclaim No. 3: Romans or Jews stole the body.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

What would be the motivation? A stolen body was the last thing the Jews, Romans, or the disciples wanted. Rome wanted peace at all cost. Jews wanted to silence the name of Jesus at all cost, and a dead, lying prophet was of no advantage to the defeated, disappointed, devastated disciples—and they did not want to experience the same fate as their former Leader—death by crucifixion.

Counterclaim No. 3: The disciples experienced mass hallucination about a resurrection.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Anything is possible, but is it probable? Evidence points to a literal, physical, resurrection. They touched, handled, and saw a risen Christ.

What caused the hallucination? Could it last over a 40-day period? What is the probability of all the disciples and 500 others hallucinating? It is easier to believe the resurrection than the wild claim of mass hallucination.

Counterclaim No. 4: They were all crazy.

You can say anything you want, but what is your evidence?

These men didn't act or speak like crazy men. They appear to be normal, capable men.

Could crazy men follow the greatest moral teacher ever to walk this planet, mobilize an army of Christians to saturate Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures, and to totally dominate an entire planet by 350 AD?

Crazy men don't unite.

I once heard a story about Tony Evans who visited an insane asylum where he observed about 200 patients walking about in a large courtyard. He asked the one attendant on duty, "Aren't you worried about an uprising and a takeover?" The attendant replied, "No! Crazy people don't unite!"

Counterclaim No. 5: The disciples visited the wrong tomb.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Why didn't the hostile witnesses take them to the right tomb? What about the Roman guards? Couldn't they find the right tomb? There are not many tombs on the Mount of Olives. The women knew exactly what tomb Jesus was buried in . . . and they visited the tomb in the morning during daylight hours. Why would they be confused? The crucifixion event left an indelible impression on the senses.

Counterclaim No. 6: It's kind of fishy that only Christians saw the resurrection, and only Christians wrote the NT. This resurrection story has bias written all over it.

You can claim anything you want, but what is the evidence?

Do we accuse witnesses in a court of law of bias because they testify to their experience or write down what they saw? Do we accuse witnesses of bias because they were there and saw an event?

Could any man witness a resurrection and remain an unbeliever?

Reason tells us that witnesses to a trauma of this nature would indeed be compelled to speak about their experience, write it down, or publish their findings. All books are written because of the experience and motivation of authors—and, we don't accuse them of bias for authoring a book.

Counterclaim No. 7: Jesus only appeared in private and not in public.

You can say anything you want, but what is the evidence?

How would you explain the resurrection? You would have to use the same criteria for evidence we are using now. This objection presupposes we are free to dictate what kind of post-resurrection appearances are acceptable. If it happened that way it was reported, why should we expect it to be any different? If the living Christ did appear in public, the evidence needed to prove a resurrection would still be the same as it would in a court of law, and we would still have to examine the original, written documents.

Maybe he did appear in public. It is hard to remain an unbeliever once you have seen a resurrection. The fact of 500 witnesses is a very public event. All were converted. All were convinced! How many more witnesses do you need in a court of law to prove a fact? Because so many saw the resurrection, a public refutation was impossible even in Jerusalem.

Counterclaim No. 8: The church created the resurrection and it became a myth.

You can claim anything you want, but what is the evidence.

Accurate presentation of facts, historical detail, geographical accuracy, and cultural specificity indicate men who lived at the time of Christ wrote these records. How could a churchman living

after the destruction of 70 A.D. know anything about Jerusalem, Bethany, the temple mount, Passover traditions, etc.?

Myths take time for legends to develop. There are too many details and addresses and personal names in the resurrection account to merit a myth. There is no “once upon a time . . .”

Myths did develop, but not until the second century. These myths were refuted by the gospel accounts to bring imaginations in line with historical facts. These myths were refuted by stewards of the gospel.

Silence of the Hostile witnesses: Finally, what evidence was brought forth in the first century by hostile witnesses to remonstrate against the resurrection? There is absolutely nothing! There is no evidence, no documents, no books, no letters, no pottery shards. Why didn't highly motivated men who had power to protect Jewish traditions write or publish counterclaims? They simply could not refute the clear facts . . . and they had no exculpatory facts in support of a counterclaim.

If a man wants to disprove the resurrection, he must answer the following:

- The empty tomb: How do you account for it?
- The transformation in the disciples' character. How do you account for it?
- The rapid spread of Christianity while hostile witnesses could marshal evidence and counterclaims. How do you account for it?
- The silence of Hostile witnesses. How do you account for it?
- The use of women in testimony. How do you account for it?
- Why the burial place of Jesus never became a sacred place. How do you account for it?
- Why the disciples died violent deaths for a lie. How do you account for it?

Conclusion of the Defense: A number of reliable men and women witnessed a medical death and burial. Three days later these same witnesses saw, touched, and heard the living Christ. Consequently, they rightly concluded that Jesus of Nazareth literally, physically, materially rose from the dead, thus solving man's fundamental problem. If Jesus rose from the dead, he is Lord. Whatever he says is absolute truth. If you will believe that He literally, tangibly, materially, physically rose from the dead, and you will confess Him as Lord and Master of your life, you can have everlasting life [Romans 10:9,10]. Trust Him today, and he will be your Savior for eternity.

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 3:36].

Modern Legal Testimony to the Resurrection

Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853) was one of the founders of Harvard Law School. He authored the authoritative three-volume text, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence* (1842), which is still considered "the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure." Greenleaf literally wrote the rules of evidence for the U.S. legal system. He was certainly a man who knew how to weigh the facts. He was an atheist until he accepted a challenge by his students to investigate the case for Christ's resurrection according to Greenleaf's own expertise on the rules of evidence. After personally collecting and examining the evidence based on rules of evidence that he helped establish, Greenleaf became a Christian and wrote the classic, *Testimony of the Evangelists*.

Let [the Gospel's] testimony be sifted, as it were given in a court of justice on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth (Greenleaf, 1995).

Sir Lionel Luckhoo (1914-1997), a modern day Sherlock Homes, is considered one of the greatest lawyers in British history. He's recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as the "World's Most Successful Advocate" fifteen times because of his amazing record of 245 consecutive murder acquittals. Luckhoo received the CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 1962. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II – twice; once in 1966 and again in 1969. He was the world's greatest expert on the rules of evidence (The Guinness Book of World Records, 1990 edition). Luckhoo declared:

I humbly add I have spent more than 42 years as a defense trial lawyer appearing in many parts of the world and am still in active practice. I have been fortunate to secure a number of successes in jury trials and **I say unequivocally the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt** (Sir Lionel Luckhoo, *The Question Answered: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* Luckhoo Booklets, back page. http://www.hawaiiichristiansonline.com/sir_lionel.html).

Lee Strobel was a Yale-educated, award-winning journalist at the Chicago Tribune. As an atheist, he decided to compile a legal case against Jesus Christ and prove him to be a fraud by the weight of the evidence. As Legal Editor of the Tribune, Strobel's area of expertise was courtroom analysis. To make his case against Christ, Strobel cross-examined a number of Christian authorities, recognized experts in their own fields of study (including PhD's from such prestigious academic centers as Cambridge, Princeton, and Brandeis). He conducted his examination with no religious bias, other than his predisposition to atheism.

Remarkably, after compiling and critically examining the evidence for himself, Strobel became a Christian. Stunned by his findings, he organized the evidence into a book entitled, *The Case for Christ*, which won the Gold Medallion Book Award for excellence. Strobel asks one thing of each reader - remain unbiased in your examination of the evidence. In the end, judge the evidence for yourself, acting as the lone juror in the case for Christ . . .

As a "lone juror," I sat quiet in my chair... As jurors often do in the jury room, I asked to return once again to a provoking piece of evidence... (Strobel, 1988)

It is good news that Christ's resurrection is true and certain. Consequently, we have assurance that His claims are true and that His promises will be fulfilled as we face man's most fundamental problem.

[1] The reader would do well to get familiar with the rules of evidence and the different kinds of proof required in court: probable cause (police tickets), preponderance of the evidence (civil cases), beyond reasonable doubt (criminal cases), and clear and convincing evidence like in child custody cases.

[2] Note: the Book of Acts was written by a legal mind recording the presentation of the gospel in the courtroom of the world. The reader should study the book of Acts from a legal perspective and note the many forensic terms used to advance the facts of the resurrection to a practical, skeptical jury in the Roman world.

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology)

51. THE LAMB WILL CONQUER THEM

Revelation 17:14 “They will fight with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, for He is the Lord of lords, and King of kings.”

In touch with the news and the political turmoil of our time, it is easy to feel helpless and hopeless. We need perspective, and the Apostle John provides this insight, not only to the first century Christians, but to us.

The Lamb is the Victor!

Who said this? Imprisoned on the Island of Patmos in the Greek Islands around 65-68 AD, the apostle John saw the risen, ascended Christ in His session at the right hand of God, in His royal robe splattered with blood.

Who is this Lamb? He is the Lord of lords, the Master and Ruler to whom all the potentates, kings, princes, prime ministers, presidents, congressmen, and parliamentary bureaucrats are accountable. He is the King of kings, the Prince of the Nations, Lawgiver, and Judge of all Mankind, Commander of all the angels, and the Royal Executor of the Divine Will.

With whom does He wage war and whom will He defeat? He is the ugly, hideous, unclean, banal, brutish, fire-breathing beast with iron teeth; the seven headed dragon-monster that rises out of sea of politics to whom all the kings of the earth lend their wealth and power.

The “them” represents all who owe their allegiance to the beast.

The Lamb defeats demons: Surely this wolf-pack of spirits can defeat one little Lamb. But, No! He has them at his feet begging not to be cast into the fires of eternal torment.

The Lamb defeats Rome and the Kings of the earth: Surely, the proud, pompous monarchs who control the world’s wealth and weaponized men in combat fatigues can defeat the little Lamb! No! He spoiled principalities and powers by virtue of his death, burial, and resurrection from the dead (Col. 2:15). At His Name, “Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord” (Phil. 2:11).

The Lamb defeats the Jews: Surely, the tight-knit money-magnets that control the economies of the world, international trade, and control Babylon’s currency can defeat the Lord Jesus Christ

and His volunteer army! No, one glance of the Lamb and they will wail like Greek mourners at a child's funeral (Revelation 1:7).

The Lamb defeats philosophers and educators: Surely, the proud flesh of intellectual professors with their lists of credentials that deny the truth of Scripture; that control academia and the universities of the world can out-smart the Lamb to bulldoze the gospel with their sophisticated rhetoric. No! Though they spread their form of knowledge, “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are in the Lamb (Col. 2:3).

The Lamb defeats atheists: Surely, the proud flesh of those who hate the Creator, the Word of God, and His law-order can prevail against the Lamb! No, He “scatters the bones of those that camp” against the Lamb like a fossil graveyard in Jurassic Park (Psalms 53:1, 5).

The Lamb defeats scientists: Surely, the proud flesh of NASA with all its aeronautical engineers and geophysicists, evolutionary schemes, mathematics, high frequency vocabularies, and fluffy dreams about deep space travel past the dangerous Van Allen Radiation Belt will stamp out faith in the Creator! No, the “heavens declare the glory of God,” and pure hearts will acknowledge the “Creator in the day of their youth” (Ps. 19:1; Eccl. 12:1).

The Lamb defeats the Media: Surely, the proud flesh of the spin misters that manipulate the news with their secular, religious bias, prejudice, and hate for the gospel will be able to propagandize the world to wage war against the Lamb! No! He guards His name, and unbeknown to them, His name is honored among the humble of the earth.

The Lamb defeats Lawyers and BAR attorneys: Surely, these arrogant lecherous vipers from the pit of hell with their words of art and sophisticated sorceries will be able to pass legislation to censor the gospel message and to prevent the saints from receiving their inheritance from the Lamb! No, voices from heaven have spoken, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” (Rev. 11:15).

The Lamb defeats Feminists: Surely, loud proud flesh that has pushed and shoved their way through society killing babies, ruining families, and seeking franchises and privileges from the State will be able to out shout, out fight, out talk, out scream, and out argue the Lamb! No, if the Lamb is able to make the great whore “naked and destitute,” He is able to humble the lesser.

The Lamb defeats Islam: Surely, these lawless monsters who murder, rape, bomb, shoot, stab and behead their way through the Middle East demanding people worship Allah or die can overcome the Lamb! No, by the grace of the Lamb, he saves some; the rest, He knows how “to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment” (2 Pet. 2:9).

The Lamb defeats Mystery Babylon and the NWO: Surely, the crown with its maritime law, legion of UCC codes, banks, deep pockets, and commercial schemes that can induce, bribe, and finance their will among the nations can buy the Lamb? No, the Lamb is not for sale.

The Lamb defeats the DNC, the RNC, and Congress: Surely, the liberal ideologues in Congress and America's political parties can create a law that will bind and control the Lamb! No, the Lamb will defeat these criminals and their coalitions, "for out His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations"

Do you face enemies bigger than you—enemies aligned with the beast and his followers? Your enemies are His enemies, and

He is able

He is able to do

He is able to do above what you think

He is able to do above what you think or ask

He is able to do exceedingly above what you think or ask

He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what you think or ask

He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all what you think or ask according to the power at work within us! (Eph. 3:20)

"Do not fret yourself because of evil doers" –

The Lamb among ravening beasts in the Plaza de Tierra will defeat them all.

52. THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

1 Timothy 3:15-16

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Paul identifies six segments of the Pillar of the Truth called the “mystery of godliness.”

Therefore, this brief seeks to answer the question, “What is the mystery of godliness?”

Without Controversy

The word “controversy” comes from the Greek word *homologoumenos* which means *to see, perceive, understand, grasp, observe, and see*.

We get the word *homoletics* (studies on how to preach) from this term. It works as an adverb modifying the being-verb “is” meaning *undeniably, certainly*.

The word “without controversy” acts like our English legal term “notwithstanding.”

That is to say, any argument to the contrary of what he is about to state admits no dispute and has no standing. Metaphorically speaking Paul seems to say, “you can take what I am about to say to the bank. It is as true as true can get.” There is no historical discrepancy in the message we preach. It is true, sure, certain, not misleading, and verifiable.

Great is the mystery

The Greek word “mystery” (*musterion*) does not refer to something difficult or impossible to understand.

Rather, it informs us of that which was hidden or concealed in the Old Testament which manifested itself to mankind, namely, the arrival of the Christ in history.

Great (Mega)

While we use the term “great” frequently, very few things are really great! But, great is the mystery of godliness.

The Greek word for “great” is *mega*. A superlative adjective, it identifies the wonder and superior quality of a thing. We use this Greek word as a prefix to many English terms: megabyte, megawatt, megastar, megabuck, megavolt, megalomania, megaflop, and many more.

Keep this word in mind as the apostle is about to reveal **six historical facts about the indivisible mega mysteries of godliness that form the pillar of truth (3:25)**.

Godliness

The term “godliness” refers in a general sense to the heart of the gospel, the eye of God, true religion, piety, and sanctification.

While the term “godly” usually refers to acts of piety or to being God-like in habits and character, that is not the emphasis in this text. The apostle, though having listed the character qualities that should mark pastors and deacons, he is not referring to the Christian’s duty to be godly in verse 16. Rather, he shows us **the Source of Godliness** Who is our Banner for righteous living. Any other Model is idolatry.

Rather, Paul takes us on a journey to the core of Divine concerns, the invasion of the kingdom of God into history through the Son, “the real McCoy,” the prototype of godliness, the source and display of God-like attributes, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Savior is not like Theos, He is Theos. He does not resemble God, He is very God of God!!

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God (Theos), and the Word was God (Theos).”

John 10:30 “I and my Father are one .” [Note: The word “one” in this text is a nominative, neuter, adjectival pronoun. The text does not refer to our Lord being one in personality with the Father, but having the same substance as Father, being very God of God as a spiritual being— the neuter referring to substance and not personality. No other being in the universe can make this claim, but with Christ, the claim came with proof of claim.]

Thus, the core of “godliness” in this text is not about our duty to perfect holiness, but about the marvelous history of Christ: His incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father — the pillar of the gospel — that God was among us in the Person of His Son.

SIX HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE MEGA MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

The six verbs in this section are all aorist passives ending with the same sound (theta, eta — the “uh” sound). They form a rhythmic cadence like a military hymn.

You can almost hear the apostle pounding a railroad spike at the beginning of each strobe while he sings the wonders of this mega mystery: *ephanerothera* (bam), *edikiotha* (bam), *ophtha* (bam), *echaruchtha* (bam), *episteutha* (bam), and *anelamphtha* (bam).

When it comes to godliness, the best among us are like the solar panels on a Mars Rover covered with dust, but Jesus? The Son does not shine as example of Godliness. He is the essence of Godliness. He does not mirror the sunlight of holiness, the nucleus of holiness that lights the cosmos burns eternally within the Core of the Savior.

Theos was in Christ and Christ was Theos in His birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and present exalted reign at the right hand of God.

(1) The first fact regarding this mega mystery is the incarnation of Christ — the day that God became a man.

“God was manifest in the flesh” (KJV) or the alternative, “Who was manifest in the flesh” or “He was manifest in the flesh” (ESV and others).

Because the first rule of interpretation is to “secure the text,” we must diverge here to wrestle with a textual problem. The KJV translated the text as “God was manifest in the flesh” while the NASB and ESV and others translate the text as “Who” or “He was manifest in the flesh.”

Without bogging the reader down in the detail of textual criticism, the reader should know that the original Greek was written in Uncial letters (uppercase without space between words). Over time, ancient manuscripts wore out and developed smears and smudges. This is the case here. Moreover, translators often abbreviated words like Θς for Θεος Theos, “God”

Earlier manuscripts use the term “He who was manifest” and not “God was manifest.” However, we must consider the theology surrounding the textual variance. John is very clear the “Word (logos) was with God (Theos) and was God (Theos) . . . and that the “logos became flesh” (John 1:1, 14). Because Jesus is Theos, I tend to sustain the legitimacy of the KJV translation, “Theos was manifest in the flesh . . .” But, in comparing ancient texts, the proper translation appears to be, “He was manifest in the flesh” (Robertson, Metzger, Aland and Aland).

Getting past the textual variance, let’s move on to the truth of this passage.

The GREAT mystery is that God / Elohim / the LORD of the Old Testament became a man; that is, Theos appeared on earth, in space and time, as a living breathing, flesh and blood human being — a man (anthropos) called “the Christ.”

Forget alien sighting and invasions. Nothing in history compares to that day in Bethlehem around 2 B.C. when Theos entered history in and through the Son.

That Theos appeared in human body with a human nature is the MEGA TRUTH of the gospel. This fact became the pillar of the gospel.

(2) The second fact regarding this mega mystery is that Christ was “justified in the Spirit . . .”

The legal word “justified” means “to declare righteous,” or to declare authentic, genuine, or real.” In law, we demand verification, validation, authentication, endorsement, and certification of all kinds of truth claims, real estate transactions, and money matters of controversy.

What could be more controversial than Jesus is God, born of a virgin, died for our sins, and rose from the dead?

Any megalomaniac can claim to be God, but where is the evidence?

Pursuant to *Administrative Procedure Act* (5 USCS 556(d)) the proponent of a rule or order has the *burden of proof*.

Hearsay, wishes, hopes, presumption, theory, and opinion are not accepted as facts in a court of law.

Rule 301. Presumptions in Civil Cases Generally

In a civil case, unless a federal statute or these rules provide otherwise, the party against whom a presumption is directed has the burden of producing evidence to rebut the presumption. But this rule does not shift the burden of persuasion, which remains on the party who had it originally.

Our Lord not only claimed to be God, He provided proof of claim with strict proof of claim — even infallible proof of claim (Acts 1:3).

His miracles were His credentials. Only God can turn water into wine, heal the sick, and walk on water. Out of death, the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead vindicating His claim that He is God, that He is Lord over the grave.

Over 500 witnesses testified to a real, tangible, historical encounter with the living Christ. Thus, the phrase “justified in the Spirit” announces lawyer-like verification for Divine assertions.

That Jesus was God is an absurdity without proof of claim. The miracles of our Lord and especially His resurrection from the dead was the Spirit’s proof of claim — His legal verification that Christ was indeed Theos, very God of God, in human flesh.

Romans 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

(3) The third fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “seen of angels . . .”

To my knowledge, I’ve never encountered an angel. And, I can’t think of anything in American politics that would attract angels.

But, the day that God became a man excited the angelic mind!

So GREAT was the Divine visitation to earth, Angels fell from skies like falling stars with wonderment and power to assist Christ in the grandeur and glory of His advent, temptations, ministry, crucifixion, and guardianship of His tomb. See: Luke 2:9-13; Luke 22:43; Luke 24:4; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 4:11; John 20:11-12.

The modern mind would do well to take an interest in that which captures the attention of angels.

(4) The fourth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “Preached unto the Gentiles . . .”

The Apostle places preaching of the historicity of Christ among the “great” (mega) things which constituted the “mystery” of Divine truth.

By preaching, the Apostle is not referring to well-prepared sermons, but the reporting of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ with conviction and confidence as the news worthy event of the first century.

Consider the hostile environment in which these historical events took place. It would have been natural for the early disciples to go *sub silentio* and remain silent. But, they didn’t. The only ones remaining silent were the hostile witnesses (The Pharisees). The disciples possessed a conviction that what they saw and heard was as real as a smile that brightens your day. They could not help but proclaim the facts of Christ’s victorious history. That these fantastic claims were preached at

all was a miracle of miracles. After all, you could get stoned preaching such an outrageous message. Stephen comes to mind (Acts 6).

Second, the message was not only preached to Jews, it was preached to all the nations hugging the Mediterranean. The Apostles announced the hope of salvation among the Gentiles.

Before our Lord's advent, a wall of partition divided the Jewish and Gentile world. In Christ's gospel, we find that playing field for salvation leveled for Jews and Greeks, rich and poor, men and women, slaves and free men. What Jewish man in his right man would extend this gospel of hope to Gentiles? None, unless the message had been justified by the Spirit.

No wonder Paul listed the preaching of this gospel as a mega event in the first century! See Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27; Colossians 4:3.

(5) The fifth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “believed on in the world . . .”

Jesus said to his disciples, “You are my witnesses . . .” (Acts 1:8) . . . and, witnesses must be cross-examined and directly interrogated to test the believability of the witness and the truth of his testimony.

The gospel message was not preached in “safe zones,” and “free speech cages” in back alleys. It was preached to juries in the market places of the Roman world among Jews and Greeks competent to judge faith claims and to cross-examine the witnesses.

While extraordinary claims demand proof of claim, they **do not** demand extraordinary evidence. The disciples used the same rules of evidence that we use today. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel and touch? ([1 John 1:1-3](#)).

The early disciples considered themselves witnesses of the Christ event. They were **not** fideists that believed faith operated apart from reason. Thomas said he would NOT believe until he could place his fingers in the wounds of Christ. Thomas was not being an ornery doubter or skeptic. He was being a normal, empirical man that rejected hearsay regarding a resurrected Christ. The burden of proof rested on the claimant and he refused to believe until he could personally, verify the claim with his five senses (John 20:24-29),

The Apostle identifies faith (“believed”) in this incredible message as something remarkable among thinking men prone to shun outrageous claims. Belief in this mystery shows the accuracy of the testimonies and the power of the truth to convince the most skeptical but honest mind.

(6) The sixth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was “received up into glory.”

Referencing the ascension, Paul identifies it as the punctuation mark of the great mega mystery of all time.

Forty days after his alleged resurrection, Jesus was taken up into heaven in the sight of his disciples. His ascension and session at the right hand of the Father as the exalted Christ ended the earthly history of our Lord.

While the story provides a nice ending to an incredible story, people do not normally levitate off the earth without some modern rocket-propulsion system. Even though such an event is highly improbable, the witnesses said that this is the way Jesus left earth (Acts 1-2:30-32).

Thus, the ascension of Christ and His session at the right hand of God not only concludes the historical account of the great mystery of godliness, the Bible pictures it as a kingly coronation where the triumphant Savior receives a golden crown. Having accomplished eternal redemption for all mankind, He now sits on the eternal throne as “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

With this good news, you don’t want to be a person who is caught up in science fiction, extraterrestrials, and invasion theories to annihilate the human race and MISS THE ONE, TRUE, HISTORICALLY VERIFIABLE VISITATION of Theos in history in and through His Son. Forget aliens! Investigate the Christ event.

The context of this passage is the previous verse:

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Every Christian church has the potential to be a “pillar and ground of the truth.”

Paul anticipated a delay in his visit to Timothy, and informs him of his purpose in writing his letter: “that thou mayest know,” a hina clause with a subjunctive holding out the possibility that Timothy and his readers might come to a full knowledge on how men “ought” (de) to behave themselves “in the house of God.”

The “house of God” would be a church gathering, not a church building.

The word “conduct” or “behave” comes from the Greek word *anestrephe* which means to “turn up side down” or “turn up and down.”

Christianity has a code of conduct which is accurately portrayed in chapter 3:1-14. A true believer changes his ways, his dress, his attitudes, his demeanor, and sometimes his habits when he or she takes up the cross to follow Christ.

Paul established Christian ethics consistent with the law of the LORD God ([Romans 13:10](#)).

He commands believers to put off the old and put on the new in Ephesians 4:21-24.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul orders men to remove their headware and for women to veil themselves when meeting in the house of God (1 Corinthians 11).

In 1 Timothy, faithful men are exhorted to pray with clean hands (2:8), and women are commanded to dress modestly and take up the role of a student.

In chapter three, the apostle lists the virtues that must mark elders and deacons in pursuit of Divine interests.

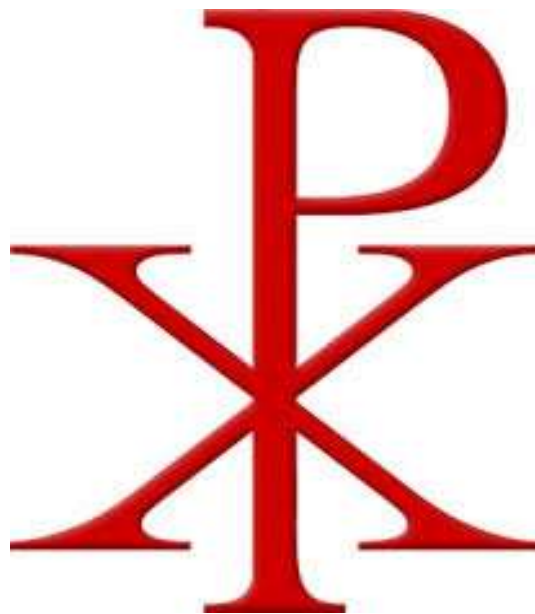
In chapter four, Paul exhorts Timothy to avoid (Jewish) myths and to train himself in godliness (4:7). If Godly commands like these were put into practice, it would turn the average American church upside down . . . or is that “right side up?”

If you want to be Godly, don't look in and in and in. Rather, look at the glory of our Lord.

*“But we all, with open face beholding (present middle participle) as in a glass **the glory of the Lord**, are changed (metamorphoo) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18).*

BEHOLD HIS GLORY

SECTION II



53. THE SAME WONDERFUL JESUS

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

We have here a marvelous text. We live in a turbulent world that is moved by political storms and the winds of political ideals. Weather changes; people marry; babies are born; precious loved ones die; real estate switches ownership; the value of the dollar shifts in the market, and the UN sets agendas that impact the globe.

Evolution promises things will get better as we consult the gods of chaos. Change is the magic pixie dust that cures all political ills. We even have politicians that run campaigns on the need for change, “yes you can,” and “you must!”

But, the truth is that time is not kind to any of us. The tall, dark and handsome cowboy ends up walking with the use of cane; and the rodeo queen ends up with more wrinkles than a Chinese Shar-Pei.

In the midst of new teachings (13:9), political reversals (13:3), increasing immorality (13:4), and sudden shifts in political power (13:1-2), the author of Hebrews pounds an iron rod into solid granite: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

The Book of Hebrews ends where it began: “They will perish, but You remain” (1:11).

1. The One who was the Son, the heir of all things, Creator of the world, and of the radiance of His glory, and the *hupostaseos* of the infinite eternal God yesterday, is sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high today (1:2-3); and,
2. The One who was greater than the angels yesterday, has at his feet ministering spirits ready “to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation” today (1:13, 14); and,
3. The One Who was made lower than the angels yesterday, is “crowned with glory and honor” as the same One Who is Executor of God’s estate today (2:7); and,
4. The One Who became “flesh and blood” yesterday in space and time to crush the power of the Devil, is the same One who can free us from “the fear of death” today (2:14); and,
5. The One who gave help to the “descendants of Abraham” yesterday, is the same One Who gives help to Abraham’s spiritual children today (2:16); and,

6. The One Who became a merciful and faithful high priest to make “propitiation for the sins of the people” yesterday, is the same One Who is able to “aid those who are tempted” today (2:17-18); and,
7. The One Who promised ancient Israel a rest yesterday, is the same One who gives Christians a Sabbath-rest today (4:1-13); and,
8. The One Who “passed through the heavens . . .” yesterday, is the same Great High Priest who “sympathize(s) with our weaknesses” enabling us to “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace so that we might receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need” today (4:14-16); and,
9. The One Who was “pious,” “obedient,” and “who was made perfect” yesterday, is the same One Who is the Source of eternal salvation today (5:7-9); and,
10. The One Who entered as a High Priest behind the veil of God’s eternal dwelling as a “Forerunner” (Scout) for us yesterday, is the same One who is an “Anchor of the Soul” for us today (6:19-20); and,
11. The One who was the King Priest of Salem and assisted Abraham in his war against five kings of the Golan Heights in Genesis 14-15 yesterday; is the same One Who is the Grantor of eternal assets designated to us by oath in the new covenant; and, the same One Who ever lives to saves us forever through the power of an “indestructible life,” and (7:22-25); and,
12. The One Who took “His seat at the right hand of God of the Throne of the Majesty in Heaven” yesterday, is the same One Who puts into effect today the blessings of the new covenant (contract) which include and are not limited to putting God’s “Laws into *our* minds . . . and hearts,” being our God and being His people” (8:1-13); and,
13. The One Who entered “the more perfect Tabernacle” with “His blood” yesterday to obtain “eternal redemption,” is the One Who “cleanses your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” today (9:12-14); and,
14. The One Who entered “the holy place *not* made with hands . . . but into heaven itself” yesterday, is the One Who “now appears(s) in the presence of God for us” today (9:23-24); and,
15. The One Who came “to do His will to do His will” “to offer one sacrifice for sins for all time” yesterday, is the same One Who forgives sinners and gives them confidence “to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus” today (10:10-18); and,

16. The One Who “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself” yesterday, is the same One Who gives you strength to “not grow weary and lose heart” today (12:3); and,
17. The One Who promised yesterday that He “will never leave you or forsake you,” is the same One Who helps us today “to not be afraid what man will do to me” (13:5-7); and,
18. The One Who gave the Fathers strength to live and die for Christ yesterday, is the One Who gives you strength to “consider intently” the “outcome of their life” and to imitate” their faith and conduct today (13:7). “He is Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

54. THE WONDERS ON THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS DAY

Luke 2:15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

The Holy Scriptures inform us that while the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks at night the angel of the Lord appeared to them announcing the good news of the birth of Christ.

At first they were scared out of the wits, but then they collected themselves, they realized that God had appeared to them through the angel, and that they were eyewitnesses of the greatest event in the history of mankind.

Immediately, they left their duties for a greater duty. The text says they said one to another, "Let us go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing . . ."

What did they go to see? And, what does God want us to see on this Christmas day?

First, they saw the Savior.

The angel announced to them, "for today in the city of David there has been born for you a **Savior**, . . ." (2:11).

Men are in need of Saviors. Saviors from poverty, from physical ailments, deadly diseases, social catastrophes, and the like. But, these Hebrews went to see the Savior who "shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

To modern man, this seems rather bland and insignificant because he has a shriveled and defective understanding of the concept of sin, its offense to God, and the judgment to come. But, these shepherds ministered near Jerusalem and the temple of God and understood their need to be saved from their sins. Likewise, we would do well to consider "the soul that sinneth shall die" and "It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment." Only a fool would go to the grave without seeking a Savior.

Second, they saw the Messiah.

The angel announced to them, "for today in the city of David there has been born for you a **Savior**, who is **Christ the Lord**" (2:11).

To modern man with no knowledge of the Scripture, this has about as much meaning as a puddle on a sidewalk. But, to these Hebrews the angel announced an ocean of truth.

Israel's history was a confluence of good kings and bad kings, victory and defeat, sovereignty and slavery, wealth and poverty. As the tides of prosperity retreated, God announced to the nation that He would send them an ultimate Savior King called "the Christ."

The word "Christ" is a title meaning "anointed one."

All of Israel's great kings, prophets, and priest were officially inaugurated into their office by an anointing of oil ceremony. These prominent ceremonies were not only a sign of special appointment, but a sign of authority and sometimes indicative of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to conduct their duties while in office. The most famous of these anointing inaugurations was the anointing of the shepherd David--an event these shepherds knew well (1 Samuel 16:13).

But, all these human kings fell short of true greatness. Their administrations were marked by a mixture of the sweet and the bitters. Nevertheless, the LORD promised the nation that He would send them the ultimate anointed King who would be their Supreme Prophet, Priest, and King-- a Savior who would defeat all their enemies and bring in ultimate prosperity. To them, history was headed toward the kingdom of God and the reign of the Lord Christ (See Psalm 2: Psalm 110; Isaiah 9:1-6; Isaiah 11).

On this holy night, the angel announced to them that the Christ child was born . . . among them . . . and that the babe in Bethlehem, the City of David, was *the Lord, Master, King, and Messiah they had been waiting for*. No wonder they "left their flocks" and sprinted into the village as fast as their sandals would slap.

But, there was more to see.

Third, they saw "the good shepherd."

The birth of Christ on or around December 25th has been an established fact for two-thousand years of history. But, modern man in his pride has disputed this date saying that Shepherds would not have been watching their flocks during the winter time.

But, this is a flawed argument.

Bethlehem is six miles from Jerusalem. The temple services required two sacrificial lambs a day. Dozens of shepherds worked their flocks on the countryside around the Holy City to supply offerings required for the Levitical system. Priests offered lambs twice a day in the temple even in the winter time.

Further, we know that our Lord was present on the Feast of Dedication during the last year of His ministry 30 years later which is recorded in John 10:22.

The **Feast of Dedication** is called "the Feast of Lights" or "Hanukkah" or "The Feast of Maccabees."

It was celebrated on the 25th of Kilev as an eight day event commemorating the reconsecration of the temple by Judas Maccabee. Because the temple that had been defiled by the Antiochus Epiphanes who in his reign of terror sacrificed pigs on the brazen altar in the temple to honor Jupiter, the temple needed to be cleansed and rededicated to the service of the LORD.

On the first day of reconsecration, the priest found only one jar of "holy" "consecrated" oil to light the candelabra in the Holy Place. Being only enough for one day, the priests were stunned the candelabra burned for eight whole days without a refill until a fresh supply of holy oil could be obtained.

The priest considered this a miracle. And, commemorated the event on the 25th of Kislev wherein the feast lasted for eight days. During these eight days, the two giant candelabras in the women's court would be lit at night time supplying light to the temple, Jerusalem, and the surrounding mountain sides.

Moreover, the Feast of Lights celebrated the triumph of the Jews over Antiochus Ephiphanes, Judaism over Hellenization, truth over evil, the worship of YHWH over paganism, and the ultimate triumph of Messiah over Israel's enemies.

On the night our Lord was born, the 25th of Kislev (honored on December 25th), the shepherds could see the lights glowing from the temple.

Though it was not a Levitical festival ordained by God, our Lord was pleased to be in Solomon's Porch on the Feast of Lights three years into His ministry around 31-32 AD (John 10:22).

The Apostle John associated Jesus' discourse on Him being the Good Shepherd with the conflicts on the Feast of Dedication--apparently, a subject of contention that carried over from an early visit erupted upon His arrival at the festival.

Our Lord, in seeking to explain His mission, announced Himself as "the Door of the Sheep," and "the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:9-11).

So, Who did the shepherds go see on the 25th of Kislev? *They went to meet the Good Shepherd, their Shepherd, the Shepherd of shepherds that was going to give His life to save their souls.*

But, He is even more than this. Jesus was not only **the Good Shepherd** that gives His life for the sheep (John 10:11), He is **the Great Shepherd** of the Sheep (Hebrews 13:20), and **the Chief Shepherd** who shepherds the under shepherds of the flock (1 Peter 5:4).

Fourth, they saw the Light of the World.

As the shepherds tended their flock by night, joy must have filled their hearts as they saw the glow from the panel of lights bursting from the giant candelabras roaring at night. Further, the shepherds were totally stunned by the appearance of the angel where the "glory of the Lord shined around them" and announced the arrival of Christ the Lord (Luke 2:8).

Tethering their excited emotions, the shepherds trotted off to Bethlehem to see the Christ . . . but more than the Christ, they saw the "Light of the world" . . . to never again walk in darkness or stumble again (John 8:12; 9:5; 11:9).

Think of the wonder of this. *These Hebrews, in one night, saw the light from the temple mount, the light of the glory of God shining on them, and the Light of World, the babe in Bethlehem!*

But, there is more.

Fifth, they saw the Lamb of God.

Jesus was announced not only as the Good Shepherd, but the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

Think of the power of this? *The Shepherds who were shepherds by trade left their flocks at night to go tend the true and ultimate Lamb of God.* The hundreds of thousands of lambs that died as substitutes for sins of men were merely shadows and types of THE Lamb of God.

Man is not saved by being good, for there is only One Who is good. God is not keeping a list of "who is naught and who is nice." Only by the shedding of blood, can man be redeemed (1 Peter 1:18-19).

There is a lamb sufficient to pay for the sins of **a man** (Genesis 4); a lamb sufficient for the sins of **a family** (Exodus 10-12). A lamb sufficient to pay for the sins of **an entire nation** (Leviticus 16); but, then **there is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world . . . and on this Holy Night the Shepherds saw THE Lamb of God** (John 1:29).

On that Holy Night the shepherds saw a baby in a manger *wrapped in swaddling clothes.*

Swaddling was the cheapest material on the market that could be called "clothes." It was a type of low grade linen the Hebrews used to wrap and bury the dead.

What a "sign!" A babe wrapped in grave clothes. A sign signaling his purpose -- *a baby born to die* -- a baby lamb, God' Son, *born to die for the sins of the world*. A baby whose sole purpose was to die? Who can grasp the wonder of it?

Sixth, they saw the God-man.

Back to the Feast of Dedication in John 10.

The shepherds tended their flock on the 25th of Kislev, circa December 25th. They saw baby Jesus on the first day of the Feast of Lights. The feast lasted for eight days. On the eighth day, Mary and Joseph went to the temple, the last day of the festival, to have Jesus circumcised. Circumcised? Yes, the Savior was a real baby boy circumcised on the eighth day according to Hebrew law, and circumcised on the eighth day of the Feast of Lights as proof that this baby was truly human.

Thus Christmas is about celebrating the humanity of our Lord.

And, it is also about celebrating the deity of Jesus.

Now lets go forward 33 years. As the debate raged on the 25th Kislev in John 10, the Jews gathered around Christ and debated Him, "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus argued that His works were proof of claim with strict proof of claim that He was the Christ, the Good Shepherd that knows His sheep and gives them eternal life (10:24-30).

In the course of conversation, the Lord said, "I and the Father are one (ev)."

The word "one" is a neuter form of the Hebrew numeral "one" (eis). In using the neuter form, Jesus was saying that He is of one substance with God. He was not teaching He was the Father, or the Father was Jesus. He was not one in personality with the First Person of the Triune God.

Rather, He claimed to be of the same substance as the Father; to have the same enduring, eternal intransient qualities of what we understand God to be. In claiming to be one with the Father, He was claiming to be God--not a god, but the God, very God of God. The Jews understood this and for this reason sought to stone him for blasphemy.

The problem, however, for the belligerent Jews was that Jesus not only claimed to be God, His miracles were proof of claim with strict proof of claim that He and the Father shared the same substance--spirit, for God is Spirit (John 4:24).

So, when the shepherds gazed upon the babe of Bethlehem, they beheld God incarnate, their Creator-God (Elohim), the God-man, the Logos made flesh, truly God and truly man, the fullness of deity in bodily form (John 1:1-18; Colossians 2:9).

What a night for these shepherds!

Let us never forget that Christmas is about seeing, knowing, and understanding that baby Jesus is the Savior, Christ the Lord, the Good Shepherd that gives His life for the Sheep, the Light of the World, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and God incarnate Who invaded history and walked among us.

Oh, the Wonders on that First Christmas Day!

55. GOD'S CHRISTMAS STORM

Revelation 12:1-5

We say, “It was the night before Christmas, and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.” Is this really the way it was on the first Christmas?

When Christians celebrate Christmas, we erect nativity scenes with a lovely young mother figure, a handsome father symbol, and an image of the Christ child lying in a manger. Surrounding the clean stable are lambs, donkeys, camels, and cows. These beautiful pastoral images communicate nothing but peace, tranquility, and happiness.

But, there is another side to Christmas story—John’s violent account of the birth of Jesus found in Revelation twelve—the power of God in human flesh—God’s Thunderclap!

In this book, God reveals blood-curdling images of collapsing mountains, burning forests, demonic locusts, and Herculean dragons. And when John discusses the birth of Jesus, he does not show us a peaceful village in Judea, but a terrifying storm brewing in the Holy of Holies—God’s Christmas Storm.

The contrast between the Matthew and Luke’s account of the birth of Christ and John’s account in Revelation is like looking at the two sides of a hand-embroidered picture. The front side reveals the artist’s beautiful stitch work. The backside of the art exposes a mass of tangled knots and threads. Matthew and Luke portray the birth of Christ in a simple, pastoral setting. John shows us the complicated tangled knots of human history—the violent storm surrounding the birth of Messiah.

Background

As the seventh trumpet sounds, voices boom: “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15). In the midst of terrifying judgment (8:7-9:20) the reader might wonder how God’s kingdom could ever be realized in a world full of unrepentant hearts (9:20). The answer to how God gains dominion over the earth is found in Chapter 12 of Revelation. Let us take a look at it.

Rev. 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.

John sees a horrendous storm brewing in the temple of God.

All Bible students understand this symbolic language. The temple is the dwelling place of God. The ark represents His throne of justice and mercy. The storm brews because holiness and love prepare to release its fury on the landscape of human history.

John uses mythological images to describe the chilling contest. This vision portrays the climatic struggle between good and evil—the conflict of the ages. The war is about how the kingdom of God will be realized on earth. Though the triumph of God’s kingdom was announced when the seventh trumpet sounded (11:15), a question remains, “How will God’s rule be manifest on earth?”

This horrific vision is God’s answer, and it reveals how the kingdom of God assumes ascendancy on earth through Christ and the proclamation of the gospel. Before us comes a blinding electrical storm, crackling thunder, loud voices, a rippling earthquake, and bone-crushing hail proceeding from the temple of God. Out of this blizzard appears a sign.

The Woman

Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

The word “and” connects this vision to the intense storm brewing in the Holy of Holies. Christ coming into history was a cyclone—a massive, discharge of unyielding holiness and pure love swelling with divine energy like giant electric capacitors in the sky.

The vision is a mythological presentation of spiritual truth. We see a woman, the sun, the moon, stars, a child, and a huge, ugly red dragon in cosmic proportions. The woman is Eve and Israel and Mary and humanity combined into one.

“Clothed with the Sun” speaks of her royal splendor and honor. Israel was heaven’s beautiful princess who gave birth to God’s downpour of love in Christ. With the moon under her feet, Israel became the hope of humanity. Only she could bring forth the Champion that could defeat the powers of darkness.

The Sun appears to represent Joseph’s father, the moon is Joseph’s mother, and the stars Joseph’s brethren, the twelve tribes of Israel.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me (Genesis 37:9)

Revelation 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be deliverer.

The “she” is the nation of Israel.

What a scene! We hear blood-curdling cries shrieking from a woman in the final stages of labor. She is alone, double over in pain clutching her midsection ready to give birth. But, it is worse than this. This woman is on the run, bleeding, seized by labor pains, and searching for a safe place to deliver a child—alone! Could anyone be more vulnerable?

Revelation 12:3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

John looks up and sees a horrible sign that causes his legs to tremble. The lonely woman agonizing with powerful contractions is being stalked by an adversary—a gigantic, hungry, hideous red dragon—a monster that wants to eat her baby. Could anything be more terrifying?

The beautiful serpent in Genesis has become the repulsive, ugly dragon in Revelation. The massive monster is a grotesque beast with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

To John’ audience the seven heads speak of nations under Satan’s control which he used to terrify humanity. The dragon is the serpent, Satan, Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome rolled into one. The ten horns speak of smaller jurisdictions, and seven crowns speak of raw political authority and power. Rome comes to mind.

To us, the beast is a symbol of the twisted instruments of sin and evil as exercised through powerful governments and their corrupt institutions to enslave men and to crush the truth of the gospel.

Revelation 12:4-5 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

Before us is the imagery of a mammoth, cosmic confrontation between good and evil. So destructive is this red behemoth that it destroys a third of the stars with one whip of his massive tail. With sticky saliva dripping from his bulging lips, the sniffing dragon stalks the pregnant woman eager to devour her wet, wrinkled newborn child while still connected to her body with

the umbilical cord. He comes to “steal and destroy.” The woman is Israel who gives birth to the Messiah, and the red dragon is Satan who seeks to devour Him.

Historically, Satan attempted to destroy the Messianic line. Cain, Pharaoh, Jezebel and others were Satan’s instruments to annihilate the promised Seed. Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persian, and Greece were savage military machines that ravaged the nation. The conquest of Israel by these alien powers made it difficult to maintain the nation’s purpose, purity, and innocence.

The birth of Jesus is viewed in universal, cosmic dimensions—the contest of the ages. The quiet, pastoral scene with sheep, goats, and cows on a peaceful night in a shepherds stable in Bethlehem is obscured by the hunter’s chase behind the scenes. Before us is a deadly pursuit by a dreadful monster—like a new born lamb in the pit of a python on a dark, cold night. In labor, the woman appears so alone. Helpless without assistance of another caring human being, the growling, sniffing monster prowls through the forest eager to rip the baby from the birth canal.

Despite the miserable conditions, the woman gives birth. The child born is the Ruler of the nations the political Enemy of this ugly dragon. The baby is God’s terrifying electrical Storm, His bone-crushing Hail, His crackling Message to humanity, His rippling Earthquake, and His deafening Thunderbolt from God’s sky to Earth. This baby is destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron and to smash them to pieces . . . and to kill the red monster (Psalm 2:1).

Like a dream, the story changes dramatically. Suddenly, the child is snatched from the clutches of the dragon and “caught up to God and to His throne.” This is John’s way of telling us that Jesus’ purity and obedience was rewarded by a promotion to sit at the right hand of God as Christ and Lord (Acts 2:36). Having defeated the trilogy of evil (Satan, sin, and death), the Lord Jesus is exalted in God’s presence as the Messianic King and Savior of His people.

John wants us to know that God did not send religion to save us. He sent his Son. He did not send an impersonal, menacing, military machine to defeat Satan. He sent a baby. God’s power and holiness and love are perfected in Jesus. He defeated the trilogy of evil (Satan, sin, and death), and was exalted in God’s presence as Lord and Christ. This is John’s way of informing us that the babe in Bethlehem is destined to rule the world with a rod of iron and to slay the red monster.

Conclusion

Remember, the great question in Revelation is this: “How will God’s kingdom be realized on earth?” John hears the whistling winds of a cyclone thrashing in the Holy of holies. He then

receives a vision—a mythological vision of a monster’s hunt for a woman and her baby. This is Revelator’s way of telling us that Jesus is God’s terrifying electrical storm.

Jesus is God’s thunderclap! Do you hear him? Jesus is God’s lightening bolt. Do you see Him? Jesus is God’s rippling earthquake. Have you felt Him? Jesus is God’s bone-crushing hailstone that ushers in the rule of God. Have you yielded your heart to Him?

In summary, Christmas is a time to reflect on the meaning of the birth of Christ. As you think about baby Jesus lying in a manger, remember that his birth was a miracle of history— a messy affair, the result of a cosmic crisis between good and evil. All the forces of Serpent sought to destroy him. But, baby Jesus was no ordinary child. He is God’s Christmas Storm, the perfection of holiness and love blasting forth from the temple of God to wage war against sin. Through Him salvation has come to mankind.

Jesus is God’s precious gift to humanity. The gift cost us nothing, but it cost him everything. Let us take a little time to thank God for his Christmas Storm—a Champion who defeated our historic enemies by virtue of his death, burial, and resurrection. For it is through the Gospel the power of God is revealed unto salvation (Isaiah 53:1; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16). (Based on Stockton’s Commentary on the Book of Revelation)

56. A CHAMPION AMONG US

Isaiah 9:6-7

Introduction of the Champion (Excerpt from “Towards Exegetical Theology, Stockton)

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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

There can be no flock without a shepherd; no Kingdom without a King; no victory without a victor; no triumph against powerful enemies without a wise, powerful champion. No ordinary military officer could pull off such a victory and usher in the Golden Age as described in 9:1-5. Something else is going on.

How could such a dynamic victory be achieved against such a monstrous foe? Isaiah asserts it was because of a gift -- a very special gift -- the gift of a child! A little boy was born to lead the campaign against Israel's arch enemy. This was no ordinary boy. He was a Son -- a gift of God. The Pual verb "given" (dL;yU) emphasizes the intense, extraordinary character of this gift. "For a child was born . . . but a Son was GIVEN!!"

To whom was this great gift delivered? Isaiah says it was given "to us," the survivors of judgment, the faithful remnant, the elect of God.

What did this Gift achieve? The noun "government" is used only here and could be translated "dominion" or "rule" or "campaign." The text says, "the government was upon his shoulder." The verb "shall be" (yhifT.w:) should be translated "was upon." Why did survivors enjoy such a stupendous victory? Because the entire campaign against Israel's terrifying enemy was upon the shoulders of this Commander Son!

The Hebrew word “shoulder” is singular which depicts the strength of this Champion. In not saying “shoulders” (plural), Isaiah hints at the ease this Commander has in ruling the nations.

Isaiah introduces us to this Champion. He has a name bearing lofty titles. Ellicott informs us that, "The kings of Egypt and Assyria with whom his nation had been brought into contact delighted in long lists of epithetic names (e.g., 'the great king, the king unrivaled, the protector of the just, the noble warrior.' Inscription of, Sennacherib in Records of the Past, i. p. 25).' Thus, the series of titles composing the name are designed to show us the excellencies of this Champion. Four

titles are given, but they compose one Name. Each title takes us deeper into the majesty and mystery of this Hero.

Wonderful-Counselor:

This title could be translated "wonderful in counsel" or "the secrets of a competent counselor." The emphasis is upon the wisdom and strategy that broke the back of the enemy and ushered in the Golden Age. Isaiah doesn't simply want us to merely respect this Champion, but to admire and adore the wonder of His wisdom.

The Mighty God (El Gibbor):

This is a title that describes the power and strength of this Champion. It is one thing to know what to do, and another thing to have the resources to do it. All our struggles are the result of not knowing what to do, or knowing what to do and not having the ability to do it. Here, this Leader seems to possess the power of the gods. He knew what to do and had the power to do it. The title, however, is not "Elohim" but "El," that is, the Champion not only has the power of a god, He is God (El)!

The everlasting Father" or "Father of Eternity" (d[;pybia]):

This appellation is problematic in that Christian theology does not permit us to blend personalities in the Godhead; that is, Christianity teaches there is only one God in substance, but three personalities in the Divine Being. Isaiah steps on the toes of Christian theologians a little bit here as he does not seem shy about calling the Son "Father." However, we can resolve this difficulty by the context. This Champion is not all muscle and no heart. He is not a head of state out of touch with the concerns of the people. This Commander and Chief led His flock like a loving, caring father would provide and protect His children. As Father of the survivors (the remnant), He led with compassion. The expression "everlasting" emphasizes His perpetuity; that is, this Champion is the ultimate, final Leader-Father-figure that saves the people of God.

Prince of Peace (~Al)v'-rf;):

This banner can be translated "Captain of Peace." When He entered the war, enemies represented by the Assyrians were devastated and the survivors saved. Peace was obtained because this Prince of Peace was first of all a savage, bone-crushing, sword-swinging Warrior that filled coffins with broken bodies of rebels against God. With the war ended, peace was in the air.

"Peace," what a wonderful word! Everyone wants peace, but there is no peace without the Prince of Peace. Peace and goodwill to men come through Jesus Christ, not the work of the United Nations or acts of state. He is the Prince of Peace because He treads down proud men in

rebellion against God's law-order, and gives grace to repentant sinners. Shalom is not just the absence of conflict, but restoration to God and His law-word. The shalom here is a result of political unity organized around this Captain and His command. There will never be world peace as long as there are rebels against God's law-order and His Son. However, Peace is available to those who surrender to His authority now (cf. Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21-22; John 16:7, 13; Romans 10:9, 10).

9:7 Of the increase of his government (rule) and peace (shalom) 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

Isaiah's presentation of Judah's Champion is delivered to us in imagery of ancient warfare. This Champion is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who single handedly defeated man's triple enemy: Satan, sin, and death. The vision is delivered to us in the perfect tense as if in Isaiah's time the final battle had already been fought and the Golden Age achieved. Because Isaiah was able to enter the mind of God to read the last chapter of history, Isaiah presents the Davidic King and His reign of peace as a fact. Because we can look back from this side of the cross, we understand that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. With our Lord resurrected from the dead and sitting in session at the right hand of God, this passage makes tremendous sense.

The "increase of his government" and "peace" is a reference to eternal blessings of our Lord's reign procured by His victory at the cross.

"Upon the throne of David" communicates to us that this Champion is the "son of David," the "Messiah," "the King of Israel," the rightful Heir to the throne. This is Christ the King reigning on the throne of true Israel. But, this is a prophecy wherein the fulfillment is greater than the promise! Christ, by virtue of His resurrection life received the ultimate commission to rule at the "right hand of God." Israel's Prince is not only Israel's King, but "King of the Nations" and Supreme "Ruler of kings on earth" (Acts 2:34; Psalms 110; Jeremiah 10:7; Revelation 1:5).

The expression "to order it" is a reference to moral qualities of the Ruler and His ability to govern with sensibility rather than out of sheer force and might; that is, this is a Captain that exercises true justice. He is the incorruptible Judge, Lawgiver, and King (Isaiah 33:22). With Christ enthroned at the right hand of God, justice is achieved. "from henceforth even forever" is a reference to the eternal character of His reign. This Golden Age is nothing less than the kingdom of God. Though Isaiah speaks in the past tense as if this has already happened, he completes his prophecy in the imperfect tense, "The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall accomplish this."

"The zeal of the LORD" is holy jealousy at work to preserve that which is precious to Him. His people are His treasure, and He will usher in this Golden Age so their joy may be full. The title "LORD of hosts" is a reference to all the armies of God and the resources of Heaven. Let us not forget that when God sent His beloved Son to the cross to wage war against Satan, sin, and death, it cost Him His Precious All.

In conclusion, Isaiah paints the Davidic King on the canvas of an ancient battlefield as a Champion crushing Israel's enemies and saving the survivors of judgment. The cruel Assyrians that spread death, destruction, and misery on earth are appropriate symbols of the real enemies of man: Satan, sin, and death. The Champion that arises out of this nation to crush the adversaries of man is none other than the Son of God. This mysterious personality is the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the Gift, the Son given to save sinners from their sins. Thus, Isaiah's masterpiece was fulfilled on the landscape of Israel beginning around 29 AD. John explains it this way:

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

57. HE BECAME POOR

Let us never forget . . .

. . . the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Unlike the rest of humanity, our Lord had a choice in his station in life.

The text simply says, “He was rich.”

Great things come in small packages. All of Heaven’s wealth is packed into that little statement.

Bursting with excitement, the Apostle John in his vision of heaven describes a portion of that wealth:

“and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God . . . And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysopterus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” (Revelation 21)

The text also says, “He became poor . . .”

- Born a King, He lived like a pauper.
- He was born in Bethlehem, the least of the cities of Judah.
- He was born the son of Mary, a maidservant, an insignificant young woman in the social structure of the nation.
- He was born in a stable, not in his house made of mortar and brick.
- Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, the cheapest linen on the market.

- His first cradle was a feeding trough (manger).
- He lived in Nazareth, a village held in contempt, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”
- He did not own a horse like other kings, but walked wherever He went.
- He lived on the gifts and donations of widows.
- He never solved a human problem by giving money to people. He had no money to offer.
- When delivering a sermon, he had to borrow a penny just to make an illustration.
- To pay an alleged tax debt created by his impetuous disciple, he sent Peter fishing for a perch with a gold drachma in its mouth.
- To fulfill prophecy, he had to borrow a donkey to make His entry into Jerusalem.
- He owned one robe which was taken from him on the day of his arraignment before Pilate.
- On that day, He was stripped of his clothing and died naked on the cross that you and I might never be naked; never fear; and never be without hope.
- In his death, He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

The text also says, “that ye through His poverty might be rich.”

He lived and died in poverty, so we might share His wealth in the Celestial City whose foundation is built on diamonds and rubies . . . but more importantly, it has “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” (Revelation 22).

Let us never forget on this Christmas day, “that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that YOU through his poverty MIGHT BE RICH.”

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

58. THE ALL SUFFICIENT LAMB

*1 Peter 1:18-19 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; **But with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

Christianity is a bloody religion. From Abel to Christ the Christian religion is all about the importance of blood in redemption. During the temple period, thousands of lambs were slain on the brazen altar. Blood flowed into the Kidron Valley in rivers of red.

It is different from Judaism and Islam in that these religions believe one enters Paradise by keeping the good deeds list and presenting them as a basis of atonement to God. In Egyptian mythology, the priests taught that the enlightened one had to be as light as a feather to enter the Stargate portal to the dimension of blessedness. In the Tantristic faiths worshipers spend time diving deeper into devotion, adoration, honoring the divine union between divinity and humanity going in and in and in to the differences between male and female, and the depth of embodied pleasure.

Christianity informs the world that atonement is only by blood . . . by the blood of a Lamb.

- There is a lamb sufficient to pay for the sins of **one man** (Genesis 4).
- There is a lamb sufficient to protect an entire **family** (Exodus 12). (Note the use of the singular “lamb” at the Passover)
- There is a lamb sufficient to cover for the sins of **a nation** which was offered on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16)
- There is a lamb sufficient to pay for the **sins of the world** (John 1:29).

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Blood is the currency of the spirit world, and when the Lord Jesus died on Calvary, He shed His blood for you. His blood is sufficient to pay for all your sins . . . even for the ones that make you blush.

Hebrews 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our¹ conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Are you stained by sin? There is a Lamb's blood that can make you as white as snow.

Do you have many sins? The Lamb's blood redeems you from all sin.

Does your conscience scream guilt? Add faith.

If Christ paid for all your sins and God accepted His sacrifice by raising Him from the dead to sit at His right hand, how many sins are there left for you to pay for? The answer is closer to none than some.

There are only two religions in the world, the religion of Cain and the religion of Abel; the religion of beans, beets, and broccoli, or the religion of blood. Judaism, Islam, and Dharma are the offspring of the religion of Cain, but the Christian gospel is fruit of Abel's faith, the first prophet (Genesis 4).

Peace comes, not by doing more, struggling more, and confessing more, but by believing in the sufficiency of the blood of the Lamb. If there is a fault among us, it is that we take too little comfort from the blood spilled at Calvary that "cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:5). Believe thou this?

Lamb of God Lyrics

Your only Son, no sin to hide
But You have sent Him from Your side
To walk upon this guilty sod
And to become the Lamb of God

Your gift of love, they crucified
They laughed and scorned Him as He died
The humble King, they named a fraud
And sacrificed the Lamb of God

Oh, Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God
I love the holy Lamb of God
Oh, wash me in Your precious blood
My Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God

I was so lost, I should have died
But You have brought me to Your side
To be led by Your staff and rod
And to be called a lamb of God

See [Twila Paris – Lamb Of God Lyrics | MetroLyrics](#)

59. THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD

Have you ever wondered about how to get God's attention . . . how you can have power with God?

We would do well to learn the message Abel, the first prophet, announced to mankind (Luke 11:50-51).

Prophet Abel has a message for men:

Cain brought the hard-earned fruits of his labor to God, but the LORD was nonplussed by his beans, broccoli, and beets.

Abel brought blood and God accepted his offering.

Abel proclaimed a truth: men are redeemed by blood . . . that blood speaks to God . . . that God values blood sacrifice.

There is power in the blood.

Of what interest is vegetables, silver, or gold to a Living Spirit? Every voodoo doctor in New Orleans knows that *"blood is the currency of the spirit world; that blood attracts the spirits."*

And, so it is with the Christian religion: "without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

Blood is the currency of the spiritual world and blood speaks to God. The blood of Abel's lamb shouted out for pardon. The blood of Abel *cried* out for vengeance. And, the blood of Christ *thunders* forgiveness for trusting sinners.

*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.*

*Genesis 4:10 And he said, ". . . the voice of thy brother's blood **crieth unto me** from the ground.*

Not all blood matters . . . but innocent blood speaks, shouts, cries, conveys, communicates, and declares a message to God.

If you want to get God's attention, forget your petty, puny, peddling goodness upon which you may rely in approaching the Creator.

Rely upon the shed blood of Christ; that is, "under stand" or "stand under" the blood of Christ as your clearance to enter His presence.

God loves clean.

*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,***

*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;*

*Revelation 12:11 And they **overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,** and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

If your sins are screaming and condemning you while conveying a message that you are not worthy to pray, then claim the deafening, intense, emphatic, ringing, roaring cries of the blood of Christ shed on your behalf.

*Hebrews 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest **by the blood of Jesus** . . .*

*For "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (1 John 1:7).*

There are **only two religions** in the world, the religion of beans, broccoli, and beets, or the religion of blood. Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism et al. follow the way of Cain. Only Christianity follows the way of Abel, the religion of blood (1 John 1:5; Hebrews 12:24).

So, if your sins are troubling you, **HEAR Abel the prophet!** God accepts men when they trust in the shed blood of God's lamb. But, if you trust in your vegetables (your works) and religious worthiness, God will not hear you. All religions are not the same nor are they different paths to the same God. There is only one way to God and it is stained with blood.

Blood is the currency of the spirit world . . . and it is the tender God accepts in exchange for souls . . . the *locus standi* for sinners who seek His acceptance and His blessing.

There is something about the blood of Christ and faith in His sacrifice that has power before the Judge of all men.

Would you be free from your burden of sin?
There's power in the blood, power in the blood;
Would you o'er evil a victory win?
There's wonderful power in the blood.

There is power, power, wonder-working power,
In the blood of the Lamb;
There is power, power, wonder-working power,
In the precious blood of the Lamb.

There is power in the blood. Blood speaks! It is the one voice God hears.

60. CHRIST THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

*John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and **tabernacle** among us, (and we beheld his glory . . .*

Let's take a journey through the tabernacle and discover Christ afresh.

How do you prepare a nation to receive the wonder of God's Son coming to Earth?

One way God did it was through the shadows and types of Israel's institutions.

The Tabernacle is one of those prototypes that prefigured the Redeemer. The Tabernacle and its furniture is to Christ what a shadow is to the Sun. He is the fulfillment of what the Tabernacle represented to the nation of Israel.

We look at the Testimony and then see how Christ was the living fulfillment of the Tabernacle in the Book of John as the Door, the Lamb on the Brazen altar, the Laver, the Table of Shewbread, the Lampstand, the Altar of Incense, the Veil, and the Mercy seat.

GOD AMONG MEN

God was pleased to dwell in the camp of His people. Think of it! God living among men! Forget aliens from outer space. Nothing compares with God having a tent among the Bedouin nation. The Creator of heaven and earth lived among men, on earth, in His tent, the Tabernacle. Likewise, God was pleased to be in Christ dwelling among men.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.

*John 1:14 **And the Word became flesh, and did Tabernacle** (skenoō) among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.*

THE DOOR

The Tabernacle had a fence around it to keep men out—an outward reminder that God is holy and that sins separate man from God (Isaiah 53:6). His justice and holiness prevented men from direct contact with Him. But, God in His love and mercy provided a way for men to approach Him. There was a door—one door whereby men could enter the courtyard to secure their relationship to Him.

Likewise, there is one way to God and that is through Christ.

*John 10:7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the **door** of the sheep.*

*John 10:9 I am the **door**: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Note: In Exodus 25, we see God drafting His blueprint with a description of the ark of the covenant, the table of shewbread, and the candlestick. This is a presentment of God starting with Himself and reaching out to man. The tabernacle panorama ends where man starts, with the five sacrifices in Leviticus 1-5. Man, in his understanding of Divine matters, begins where God ends, with the need for him to bring an acceptable sacrifice for his sins. Thus, in Exodus God's draft begins with the ark, a symbol of His throne, and ends with a description of the sacrifices needed for man to approach Him.

There are lessons here for us. In our Christian journey, we must unravel the truth that each piece of furniture represents in order to grow in his understanding of redemption. Our course of spiritual growth begins with understanding Christ as the door, the sacrifice, the altar, the laver, the bread, the candlestick, the altar of incense, the veil, the mercy seat, and an understanding of the sovereignty and authority of Christ on the throne as represented by the ark of testimony.

Note: that all religions are a door or path to God is sheer blasphemy, the ultimate expression of human ignorance about all things Divine. While there is only way to God, there are many ways to hell . . . and paths are overcrowded.

THE BRAZEN ALTAR

The first object a man would see when entering the Tabernacle area was the brazen altar with acacia wood overlaid with brass—the place where a man's lamb was offered. The bronze (usually symbolic of judgment on sin in the Bible), measured 7.5 feet on all four sides and 4.5 feet deep. Four horns projected from the top four corners and a bronze grating was inside to hold

the animal. The brazen altar represented the grand exhibition of **the meeting-place** between a holy God and a sinner.

Since blood is the currency of the spirit world, blood was required to pay for the sins of the man. It was there at the brazen altar a lamb became man's substitute wherein the believer was redeemed by blood.

There were five offerings in Leviticus 1-5 foreshadowing the different accomplishments of Christ's sacrifice. The believer would do well to investigate all five aspects of these offerings because they represent the fullness of what Christ accomplished at Calvary.

Thus, to worship God, the worshiper needed a lamb. In the Book of John, John the Baptist, Israel's true high priest, announced Jesus as the Lamb of God destined to die for men on the altar of God, the cross.

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the (brass) serpent in the wilderness (on a brass pole), even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

Hebrews 9:22 The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

"For you know that ... you were redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

THE BRAZEN LAVER

Between the brazen altar and the veil into the holy place stood a brazen laver filled with water. It was used to wash the hands and feet of the priest before he entered the holy place to trim the candlestick, service the table of showbread, and offer incense on the golden altar of incense. The laver and its water inform us that the one approaching God must not only be cleansed by blood, he had to be washed periodically with water. The blood secured the worshiper's position before God eternally, but water was needed to practically cleanse the believer from defilement he picked up from walking in this world. Likewise, Jesus not only cleanses us with His blood, but he washes our souls with the Word of God to qualify us to fellowship with Himself on a day-to-day basis.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

*John 13:5, 8 After that he poureth **water** into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded . . . Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

*John 15:3 Now ye are **clean** through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

Note: There is a relationship between the brazen altar, the altar of incense, and the mercy seat. In God's mind, there is only one altar. But, they are broken down and separated to facilitate the weakness of man and to assist His people to understand the various facets of this diamond we call redemption.

In the brazen altar we see Christ meeting the fire of Divine justice; in the golden altar, we behold the virtuous Christ feeding the Divine affections. At the brazen altar the fire of Divine wrath was quenched; at the golden altar, the fire of priestly worship burned before the throne. The soul delights to find Christ in both. The brazen altar is what meets the need of a guilty conscience. It is the very first thing for a poor, helpless, needy, convicted sinner. There cannot be settled peace, in reference to the question of sin, until the eye of faith rests on Christ as the antitype of the brazen altar. The golden altar is what meets the needs of a thankful soul caught up with the wonders of Christ. The mercy seat is the place where man meets with God and is a culmination of what both altars represent.

THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD

The table of showbread was a small table made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. It measured 3 feet by 1.5 feet and was 2 feet, 3 inches high. It stood on the right side of the Holy Place across from the lampstand and held 12 loaves of bread. On this table was placed the food of the priests. For seven days those twelve loaves of "fine flour with frankincense" were presented before the Lord, after which, being replaced by others, and then used to feed the priests who fed upon them in the holy place.

Likewise, Jesus is the bread of life that feeds the souls of believers.

John 6:32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

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.

John 6:48 I am that bread of life.

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

Note: One should understand that the twelve loaves typify the humanity of Christ, and the golden table the deity of Christ. He is the God-man—the Word made flesh, fully God and fully man. The “fine flour,” of which the loaves were composed, represent His perfect, refined manhood containing both grace and truth (the glory of God-John 2:13). The “frankincense” foreshadowed the entire devotion of our Lord’s manhood to God. Here was one man on earth totally and completely devoted to the will of God. What a marvel to Heaven’s eye! Further, those who minister the things of God must have food to eat. Christ is not only the subject of preaching, but the motivation of preaching, He is the food that feeds and sustains the soul of the pastor-priest. Sermons are simply an overflow of the heart captured by the wonders of the Son.

THE CANDLESTICK

The golden candlestick had one main trunk with six branches filled with olive oil. It provided light for the priest in the holy place in their service of the Tabernacle. Without light, the priests would be stumbling around in the darkness unable to perform their duties accurately. Likewise, Jesus is the light and sunshine that shows men the way to the Father.

John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Note: God’s priests needed light as well as food. Both food for the soul and light to perform their ministry accurately was provided in Christ. In this candlestick there is no mention of any material but pure gold. “All of it shall be one beaten work of fine gold.” “The seven lamps” with wick and olive oil which “gave light over against the candlestick,” express the perfection of the light and energy of the Spirit of God, founded upon and connected with the glorious perfections of Christ. Our Lord was one full of the Spirit, and Who conducted His ministry in the power of the Spirit. Thus, the seven perfections of the Spirit were upon Him (Isaiah 11:2; Revelation 1:4; 3:1).

Aaron had to keep the candlestick burning continually reminding ministers of the gospel they must always perform their duties in the light and power of Another. Nothing human was permitted to be added to the ministry. It was strictly forbidden to sweat in the service of the Lord (Ezekiel 44:18). As priests of Almighty God, we serve in the heavenlies, and our energy is by the Spirit founded upon Christ. Let's keep our lamps trimmed and full (Ephesians 5:18).

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

The altar of incense was a box about three feet high and a cubit square. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. The priests would take coals from the brazen altar, place it on the golden altar, and burn incense in the holy place. It shadowed many things. First, it is a type of the Father enjoying the perfections of the Son; "All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad" (Psalm 45:8). Secondly, it provided a type of the intercession of Christ on behalf of His people who "ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

In the book of John, we see Christ interceding for His disciples in His High Priestly Prayer in John 17.

John 17:1, 15 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee . . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

Note: This altar typifies the wonderful position of believers in Christ. We claim not only the efficacy of His work at the cross, but the efficacy of His intercession for us before the Father. In contemplating the altar of incense, we enjoy the reality and efficacy of Christ's intercession. Forever done with self and our attainments as reasons God should bless us, we are occupied totally with the goodness of Christ and our righteousness in Him. Our Lord intercedes for us in heaven and it is our privilege to rest in and enjoy what He has accomplished for us. If we look inward to self, we find nothing but defilement; if we look at Christ, we find that we are "accepted in the Beloved."

Men need a priest to service them at the brazen altar, but believers are now called priests who have a duty to burn incense at the golden altar—to offer up praises to God (1 Peter 2:5-9). Our energy to worship is fueled by ambers from the brazen altar, and our grand theme is the fragrance and beauty of Christ.

THE VEIL

Between the holy place and the holy of holies was a four-inch-thick veil said to be weaved by the virgins of Israel. The veil was a symbol of separation. It informed men that the way to God had not yet been provided. When Jesus died, the veil in the temple was rent in two announcing to mankind that Christ had opened the way for men to come to God through the cross.

John 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus,

*Matthew 27:51 And, behold, the **veil** of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;*

Mark 15:38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

THE MERCY SEAT

Behind the veil in the Holy of Holies was the ark of the covenant, a rectangular box made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. It was 3 feet, 9 inches long and 2 feet, 3 inches wide and high. No measurement was ascribed as to its height as the mercy of the Lord is higher than the heavens. On top of the ark was the atonement cover also called the mercy seat with the cherubim. Inside the ark was the two tablets of the law, a golden cup that held manna (Exodus 16:32), and the Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17:10).

The ark represented the throne and sovereignty of God:

“O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.” (Isaiah 37:16).

Likewise, the mercy seat was the place blood was sprinkled once a year by the high priest to cover the sins of the people. Once blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, the price of sin was paid, and the sprinkled blood quieted justice and enabled God to be merciful to His people. Thus, the mercy seat was the place man had to meet with God . . . with blood, the price of redemption.

*“There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, **I will meet with you** and give you all my commands for the Israelites.” (Exodus 25:22)*

Likewise, Jesus is the mercy seat, the place where man can meet God. His blood secures eternal redemption for all who believe.

Thus, we see a marvelous picture of Christ as the mercy seat in John 20. Imagine the scene when Peter and John peered into the tomb seeing two angels, one standing at the head, and the other at

the feet of where Jesus's body once laid in the tomb. He was risen! But just as important, Jesus was to them the ark, the mercy seat, and the blood that secured their eternal redemption.

*John 20:12 And seeth two **angels** in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.*

Note: The ark of the covenant and the brazen altar present, as it were, two extremes. The ark represented the throne of God established in “justice and judgment” ([Psalm. 89:14](#)). The brazen altar was the place of approach for the sinner where “mercy and truth” kissed each other. It was the place where the law was upheld, and mercy became available to men. Man, in himself, dared not to approach the ark to meet God, for “the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest” (Hebrews 9:8). But, once Christ died and rose again, the way into Heaven's kingdom was made clear to all men.

Let us never forget that the greatest event of all time was the invasion of the Kingdom of God into history in the person and work of Christ. Nothing compares to the marvelous event of “God with us.” Since Christ has come, men can come and meet God at the mercy seat (the cross): He is the grounds upon which all who desire to be right with God can find acceptance:

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

Thus, in the Book of John the apostle leads us on a journey into the Holy of Holies through Christ Who is our Door, our Lamb, our Laver, our Bread, our Lampstand, our Altar of Incense—the One in Heaven who intercedes on our behalf, and our Mercy Seat where we can meet God.

61. THE PRIEST WHO INTRODUCE OUR HIGH PRIEST

Matthew 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The Last Aaronic High Priest Introducing the Eternal High Priest

Have you considered why our Lord Jesus Christ went to John to be baptized? Or, why God chose John instead of Herod or Annas or Caesar to introduce Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world?

Even John was perplexed by the appearance of Christ before him to undergo the ordinance saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?” (Matthew 3:14).

This article investigates the proposition that John was God’s High Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood and that Jesus needed to be baptized as a requisite for His high priestly ministry in the order of Melchizedek.

Before Aaron and his sons could perform the duties of the Levitical priesthood “Moses had Aaron and his sons come near and **washed them with water**” (Leviticus 8:6). Thus, the baptism of Christ was a symbol of washing which was a requisite for Him to enter His priestly, kingly ministry to Israel.

Our Lord’s first official act was to enter the temple in Jerusalem and to cleanse the temple of graft occurring during the administrations of Annas (6-15 AD), the retired high priest, and Caiaphas (27-36 AD), the political appointee of Rome. Caiaphas and His father-in-law Annas maintained a banking, money-changing scheme during temple festivals to fleece God’s sheep for their own enrichment.

Caiaphas was not God’s appointed high priest. Rather, he was Rome’s choice; that is, the priesthood had been politicized . . . and like all political appointments, the ruling official had obligations to the government. Bribes and franchises soon followed turning the temple into a religious for-profit business. This is the reason why Christ drove the money-changers out of the temple ordering, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of merchandise!”

In contrast to the corruption of the political priesthood was the purity of John the Baptist, God's true, official, duly appointed and uniquely qualified High Priest to the nation.

Matthew 11:11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist . . .

It takes a holy man to introduce the holy Son to mankind.

Because people are sinners, they need a qualified advocate to mediate their concerns to the Most High God.

John was totally qualified to introduce Christ to the world because . . .

John was a man.

Only a man could represent the concerns of men to God; and, only a man could mediate the interests of God to mankind. Women were absolved from temple, sacerdotal duties. Because John was a male and not a woman, he was a potential candidate among men to have mediatorial privileges in the things Divine.

John was not only a man but a son of Abraham and a member of the twelve tribes of Israel.

John was not a "Jew" in the religious or political sense of the term, but he was a son of Abraham, the Father of the Hebrew nation, a member of the twelve tribes of Israel chosen to be a blessing to the whole world. While race does not commend a man to God, he was among the people to whom God revealed His law, His word, and through whom came the Savior.

John was not only a member of the twelve tribes of Israel, He was a Levite.

Levites were charged with duties connected to the Tabernacle which included its military force, its priesthood, its services, its judiciary, its lawyers, and its educators. The Levites had a sword carrying police unit, lawyers who studied the Torah, judges who decided criminal and civil matters, singers and composers who wrote hymns for tabernacle services, and priests who performed the rites of propitiation in the temple, and teachers who instructed the nation on the ways of God.

John was not only a Levite, he was a descendant of Aaron, Israel's first duly appointed High Priest (Leviticus 9).

John was the son of Zechariah, of the clan of Abijah, a descendant of Aaron. His mother Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron (Luke 1:5)—a tiny fact-filled titan truth.

John was not only a descendant of Aaron, his birth was announced by an angel; that is, he was the special, appointed son of Zechariah the priest.

It was during the offering of incense in the Holy Place that an angel suddenly appeared to Zechariah to announce that he was going to be the father of a very special child who would lead many to the Lord (Luke 1).

John was not only a man and a special son of Zechariah, he was a pure descendant of Aaron.

The facts surrounding John are intriguing. John was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, both descendants of Aaron. Because his parents were both of pure priestly stock, John was qualified to be an Aaronic priest and to serve in the temple.

John was not only a special Hebrew Levite with a pure priestly lineage back to Aaron, he was a pure Nazarite.

A **pure Nazarite** did not cut his hair, touch dead bodies, or drink wine. Thus, the Nazarite purity of John the Baptist uniquely qualified him to be a true and virtuous priest to God (Number 6:1-27; Luke 1:15).

John was not only a special descendant of Aaron and a pure Nazarite, but a priest-prophet that would minister in the spirit and power of Elijah, the head of the prophets (Luke 1:17).

Here was a man that knew the Word of God, His law, and had the discernment to speak God's will to the people.

Consider that John was not only a prophet-priest, but a Spirit-filled Hebrew, Levite, Nazarite, and Aaronic priest-prophet!

Scripture informs us that "he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15-17). Think of it! A special, Nazarite, prophet-priest filled with the Spirit **from the womb!** Who had ever heard of such a thing? John was the most spiritually qualified man in history to be a priest and to mediate the things of God to man.

But, there is more!

John was not only a special Nazarite, prophet-priest, but God's Spirit-filled high priest-prophet.

It is believed, by many scholars, that Zechariah was the appointed high priest that year and that the angel of the Lord appeared to him while he was performing his duties at the Feast of Tabernacles circa the fall of 3-2 B.C.

Since Zechariah performed the duties of the High Priest, this made John the son of a high priest qualified to serve as a high priest for Israel. And, since he was a spirit-filled priest, a son of Aaron, he was God's choice for high priest.

In contrast to Caiaphas, the corrupt Roman appointed priest, John the Baptist was the most pure, holy, qualified man in history to be a High Priest and to introduce God's beloved Son to the world (Luke 1:15-17; Leviticus 10:8, 9).

No wonder Jesus said, "truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist . . ." (Matthew 11:11).

God did not call the likes of a Caesar, or Cleopatra, or a Herod to introduce His Son to the world. He did not use such carnal, defiled people as a Winston Churchill, a Queen Elizabeth, or a Bill or Hillary Clinton to introduce the King of kings to mankind. Perish the thought!!

He called a special, uniquely qualified, Spirit-filled Nazarite High Priest-Prophet to perform a ceremonial baptismal washing and to introduce Christ as Israel's ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King.

It was necessary that God's last and greatest Aaronic High Priest be the one to introduce to the world His beloved Son, the King of Israel, the Lamb of God, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, the Gateway to God, the Resurrection and the Life, the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, God's eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, and the Sacrifice who would save His people from their sins at the cross, and enter into the Heavenly Temple to intercede for them at the right hand of God (Hebrews 5, 9-10).

It took a holy man to introduce the holy Son.

Oh, the mystery of such things.

62. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SON

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by the Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

If God wanted to speak to you, would you be interested in what He has to say?

We are living in the information age where advertisers are begging us to buy their product, taste their tacos, and go see their movie production. Go to any city and you can see the millennials walking down the street talking on their cell phones, texting their friends, and reading their emails.

Our text says that God has spoken in history. But, who is listening? Modern men are driven by the tyranny of the urgent and are prone to neglect the essential things of life—understanding God’s revelation being one of them.

Our text informs us that God has spoken, and since this is so, it is incumbent upon intelligent men to explore what He has to say. Without fanfare or a drum roll, Hebrews 1:1-3 stresses the wonder of God’s message to mankind through the Son very simply. This is the Spirit’s way of telling us the value of the Lord Jesus Christ and why men need to carefully consider the significance the Son. Let’s take a look at the text.

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

The Greek word for God is *theos*. It is in the emphatic position in the sentence. The definite article “o” directs us to the one true Theos Who has spoken in history.

Contrary to the modern proposition that all religions worship the same god, the Bible directs us to the God of the Bible. All other religions are fictions and frauds. The truth about God can only be found in Christianity.

The term “sundry times” addresses the seasons of revelation at various times in history. God spoke to Adam (4000 + BC), Noah (2400 + BC), Abraham (1900 BC), Moses (1500 BC), David (1000 BC), Jeremiah (600 BC), and finally by the Son (30 AD).

The term “many ways” informs us of the various means whereby God spoke to men: by direct communication, dreams, angels, visions, and through His prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The phrase, “thus saith the LORD” was the authoritative utterance that announced the Source of the message as coming from Theos. The Moody Handbook of Theology by Paul P. Enns reports that the terms “God said,” or “Thus says the Lord” is used thirty-eight hundred times in Scripture. The authoritative enactment clause, “Thus says the Lord” is used 500 times directly --- an expression lacking in apocryphal literature and other Jewish literature.

All that God said to Israel through the prophets was precursory to the main event—the arrival of the Son in history. The ultimate message from God has its epicenter in the Christ event.

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *the Son*, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

The time marker “last days” has given interpreters fits. Does the phrase “last days” include our time or does the phrase “last days” direct us to the end of the Jewish age? Since two-thousand years has passed since Christ was on earth, I am prone to see the “last days” as the end of the Hebrew age (Abraham to Christ) which was completed with the ministry of Christ and His apostles (30-70 AD). Further, the manifestation of Christ is the gospel age, the last days of which there is no other.

Any claim that God is speaking to men today is a canard at best and blasphemy at the worst. Since Christ is the end (telos) of the law (Romans 10:4), the “grand finale” of God’s revelation to men about Himself, any claim that God is speaking directly to men today is an insult to God’s magnum opus through the Son.

We live in an age where men are fascinated with UFOs and alien myths, but NOTHING compares with the invasion of the kingdom of God to earth in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Eight elevated facts are registered in rapid succession to impress the mind with the significance of God on earth in Christ.

EIGHT FACTS ABOUT GOD’S SON

First, God spoke to men through the Son.

That God would speak to sinful men is a marvel in itself, but that He would love us so much as to send the Son to teach us about the Himself is nothing short of wonderment!

The Book of Hebrews was written to Jews who were in danger of thinking too little of Jesus. The author, therefore, seeks to explain to them the value of God's message to mankind through the Son.

Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity stands in relationship to the First Person of the Trinity as a Son to a Father. But, the expression "His" Son is not in the text. He is simply called "the Son." The crispness of His name should excite wonderment.

In times past God spoke to men through angels and His servants the prophets, but Jesus is better than the angels is more important than the prophet-servants. He is the Son, the ultimate mediator of God to men. The law was the objective revelation about God, but Jesus is the Living Torah, the subjective revelation of God to the world – the telos of the law (Romans 10:4). These revelations came at various times, in small proportions, but the Son is the complete manifestation of God to humanity (John 1:1, 14, 18).

Second, the Son is the Heir of all things.

While God as Creator and Redeemer has many sons and daughters whom He was pleased to bless and grant gifts, He only has one Son who is Heir of all things. Calling the Son the Heir asserts the value of the Son in the eyes of the Father. Before us is a Prince who inherits the riches of His King-Father.

Third, God made the worlds through the Son.

Men owe their existence to the God of creation, and men would do well to worship Him as the all-wise, all-good, all-powerful Creator.

But, our text puts the Son in the position of the Architect, Builder, Executor, and Creator of the universe. The Second Person of the Trinity is called the Maker of the Ages (aeons) which we know as "this age" and "the age to come;" the present heavens and earth, and the new heavens and new earth to come.

3 Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Fourth, the Son is the brightness of His glory.

The word “brightness” or “radiance” comes from the Greek word *apaugasma*. The root word of *apaugasma* is *apaugázo* which means to emit light or splendor which in turn is derived from *apó* (from) + *augázo* (shine).

The glory here is the same glory (*kabod*) that inhabited Israel’s temple that men were not permitted to see because of its blazing brightness (Exodus 33:18; 40:36). The glory has been compared to the radiance of the Sun which is so brilliant one cannot directly look at it without damaging the eyes. This is the author’s way of informing us of the golden beauty and Divine Nature of the Son.

Fifth, the Son is the express image of His Person.

The word “image” is the Greek word *hupostasis*. The word *hupostasis* refers to the essential nature of a thing; the foundation of a building; the title deed to property. In this case, the Son is of the same substance as the Father and bears that which is the very nature and essence of Theos. As the Son, He shares all of God’s transitive and intransitive attributes.

The noun “express” is the Greek word *charackter* which refers to a stamp or embosser that leaves a precise imprint on a document. We get the word “character” from this Greek term – the aggregate traits that make up a person. The root word of the noun *charackter* is *charasso* which means to *inscribe* or to *etch*. Roman coins bore the image of the emperor. Wax seals bore the sign or icon of its source of origin. The engraving represented the prototype.

God is not an idea or force or power. He is spirit . . . but we can’t see a spirit.

When the Son became flesh, men could see what God was like.

His presence on earth and interaction with us provided a visible, tangible “imprint” of who God is and what He is like in a way that would be impossible for anyone who was not God-incarnate. In this case, the Son is the exact, precise, accurate, living-breathing representation of Theos.

Sixth, He upholds all things by the word of His power.

This is the author’s way of telling us that that all things are dependent on Christ and held together by His power.

Clarke says it well: “This is an astonishing description of the infinitely energetic and all-pervading power of God. He spake, and all things were created; he speaks, and all things are sustained.”

There is no such thing as “Mother Nature.” The universe is not self-sustaining. The Son is the Source and the Sustainer all things. He spoke all things into existence and bears up and holds up all of creation.

Seventh, the Son cleanses sinners.

“ . . . he had by himself purged our sins . . . ”

Notice the words “purged,” We get the word “catharsis” from this Greek term. It means “to cleanse” or “to purify.” The term is a reference to our Lord’s saving work at Calvary. Blood is the currency of the spirit world, and by His shed blood, the Savior paid the price for our redemption. His blood cleanses sinners and removes their spots so that men can be accepted in God’s sight.

Notice the phrase “by himself.” He doesn’t need our help to atone for our sin. Moreover, none of us were around to assist in the work of redemption. His commission was perfect and there is nothing we can do to add to His accomplishments at the cross. Our sin is messy and we are ashamed. But, He purges sin, cleanses us, and removes the stain of sin from our record. He faced the Calvary alone and His work as the Lamb of God is sufficient to cleanse the vilest sinner. Oh, to accept it . . . and rest in it . . . and glory in it!

Notice the words “our” which can only refer to believers who have come to trust the Son. His work is sufficient to cleanse all sinners, but is effective only for those who believe. He offers forgiveness to all, but the offer must be received before its operations effect the soul.

Eighth, the Son sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The Son fought for our salvation alone at the cross, and God accepted it! Blood was shed. He paid the price! Atonement is complete! He accomplished all that the Father required, and God was so pleased with Him, He gave the Son the seat of greatest honor, at His right hand where one day every lamb in His fold will share in the glorious benefits of His triumph at the cross and of His reign at the right hand of God.

In conclusion, we have the same problem as the ancient Hebrews. Our thoughts about Jesus are too small. We are fascinated by aliens, UFOs, and sports figures. We think too little of the Son, and do not value Him as we ought.

The first three verses of Hebrews one was designed to elevate our thinking about our Lord, and to inject steroids of truth into stagnant minds of banal man.

The coming of the Son is the most important event in history. He is more important than the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and the Sun that shines on the earth, or reports of aliens visiting this earth. If God were to appear to men today, He would ask, “What did you think about the Son?”

63. HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name

JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins

The Father sent His Son into the world to save His people from their sins. He did not send a law or code or statute to deliver man.

He did not create a congress or a corporation to transform society by an act of the State. He gave His Son to die on the cross to set men free.

There is no man-made institution or government that can save man. Salvation is in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and not government.

Neither the church nor the state are mediators between God and man.

Further, He did not send Jesus to assist man in saving himself. Christ is not the Great Helper, but the Great Savior. Salvation is His work, not the work of the State . . . or the work of man.

More and more modern man seeks to create a humanistic utopia through law and not by Jesus Christ. The majority of politicians are deeply religious and intensely concerned about saving society through law. According to humanists, more and better laws are the means of creating "quality of life" for mankind. But, whose standards for "quality of life" is not stated.

Christianity is a proponent of law . . . but limited law. The phrase "thou shall not . . ." places restrictions on law. If it is not forbidden, you are free to do what you want as long as you don't infringe on the rights of others. While Christianity believes in the rule of law, it does not try to change man or society through law. In fact, all of Christian law can be summed up in "love your neighbor as yourself" "Do you neighbor no harm." Contrast that will the millions of codes, regulations, and statutes laid upon corporate man by Congress--laws that turn all men into criminals.

Changing man is the task of religion and the purpose of the gospel, not Congress. Biblical law does not attempt to save man, it seeks to restrain evil by protecting life and punishing lawbreakers. Christ is the Savior and it is through His person and work men are delivered from the power and penalty of sin. The problem of man and his institutions is not the economy or a lack of law, but sin at work in men. What is needed is for public officials to acknowledge Christ as Savior, to surrender to His Lordship, and limit their administrations to Biblical purposes.

Our Lord came to set men free, not to do as they please, but to be free from the power of sin and its destructive work in the human heart.

1 Corinthians 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

In the next chapter of Matthew, we see the Magi come to worship Christ as the new king. And, we would do well to remember that He is the King and surrender to His authority, and to resist the madness of overreaching government official. If the Magi disobeyed the direct order of Herod who demanded they return to Jerusalem as his informant on the whereabouts of the Christ child, then we would do well to model their example, and obey God . . . and in this case, obedience to God meant disobedience to the despotic orders of King Herod.

64. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO ANGELS

Hebrews 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

INTRODUCTION

It is true that we think too much of ourselves, and too little of our Savior. Modern man is more fascinated with anthropology than Christology; xenoarchaeology than Theology.

In Biblical times there was a danger of thinking too high of angels and too low of the Son; of angelology rather than Christology.

The subject of angels is part of the Biblical record. An angel found Hagar. Angels met with Abraham. Angels were part of Jacob's dream regarding his ladder to heaven, and these beings guided Israel through the wilderness. They even strengthened Christ after his temptation (Genesis 16, 18, 31; Acts 7; Matthew 4).

Judaism stresses the importance of angels as mediators of the covenant. Jews believe that individuals have guardian angels. According to the Apocrypha great knowledge comes to man through angels. In the *Sefer ha-Razim* angels appear to be used for purposes of magic. The Talmud seems to teach that God creates angels every day to praise God, then sink in the river of fire (*nehar di-nur*).

Though thoroughly humanistic, contemporary man is fascinated with angels. There are movies called "City of Angels," "Touched by an Angel," and "Ghost Rider." Angels even appear in the outfield. It seems every store has a shelf where one can purchase icons of cherubs. Every day we are faced with reports about UFOs, alien sightings, and extraterrestrials. Just mention the term "angel," and men are all ears.

As intriguing as angels have become, nothing compares with a study of Jesus Christ. Because of the importance Judaism placed on angels, there was a danger of these people neglecting the paramount revelation of the Son's historical visitation to earth.

And, this is the purpose of the first chapter of Hebrews—to show the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ to angels. It is far more important men investigate the wonders of Christ than to explore the presence of angels. He is as superior to the angels as a diamond is superior to clay.

HE IS A SUPERIOR BEING WITH A SUPERIOR NAME

Hebrews 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Behind this treatise is the presumption that the readers of Hebrews were aware of the Christian gospel regarding the incarnation, mediation, and exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God.

Whatever angels are, the author of Hebrews wanted his readers to know that Christ is a superior Being with a superior name.

Angels are called “spirits” and “ministers” in this chapter, but the Son is called the “brightness of His glory and the express image (*charackter*)⁶ of His person⁷” (1:2). Sharing His transitive attribute, men are declared to be made in the image of God, not angels. The plural pronoun in Genesis 1:26, “Let **us** make man in our image” refers to a conversation between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that is, man was created a sentient being like the Divine Son. No angel could claim such a distinction.

Two angels are mentioned by name in the Bible—Michael and Gabriel. But, the name of the “Son” was superior to all names possessed by angelic beings.

Because men saw “spirit beings” as superior to “flesh and blood” beings, both Jews and the Gnostics had difficulty understanding how the incarnate Son could be superior to these ministering spirits. However, the work of redemption required the work of His Son, not angels. No angel was qualified to be the savior of mankind. It is through our Lord’s incarnation and work as Mediator of the New Covenant that He assumes supremacy.

The task of removing sins as a barrier between God and man required the mediation of the Son, not angels. Just as a child lacks the capacity to represent the concerns of the United States before the UN, angels lack the capacity to effectively mediate between God and man. Thus, the name “Son of God” not only conveys the superiority of His person, but His solitary qualifications to be the Mediator between God and man.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

⁶ Charackter: the mark made by a stamp or embosser.

⁷ Person (hupostasis): refers to the foundation or substance of a thing. In this case, Jesus is of the same substance or material or nature of God.

The emphasis here is on the Sonship of Christ. The quote is from Psalm 2:7. The interrogative “to which” (tivi) is meant to challenge our understanding of the Bible. Angels are not made in the image of God nor are they sentient beings. Though angels are generically called “sons of God” (Job 1:6), which one was qualified to be “God’s Son?” What angel was of the same substance as God? Only Jesus could say, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:31f). No angel was ever called “a son.” But, Jesus being a superior Being is called the “Son of God.”

The term “today” informs us that at some time when there was no time, a relationship was declared wherein the Father called the Second Person of the Trinity the “Son” (Psalm 2). The term “begotten” does not mean “created.” It was a declaration not a creation; a pronouncement not an establishment; a relationship not workmanship. Jesus did not become the Son when He was born in Bethlehem. He was the Son before He came to earth. But, His incarnation brought into focus His unique relationship, alliance, accord, and affiliation with the Father. Being God’s Son He could represent Heaven’s interests to man; Being a man He could represent man’s interest before the Father.

HE IS SUPERIOR IN WORTH

6 And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

The quote is from Psalm 97:7, the Old Testament gospel psalm. The main truth of the psalm is that the LORD (Christ) reigns. Therefore, all creatures are called to bow the knee and acknowledge His authority.

Having established that the work of mediation (1:3) is reserved for the Son and not angels, the author demonstrates that even God’s creature-angels are called to worship Christ and not the other way around.

Jesus is called the *prototokos* (begotten) which means “first born” or the one existing before creation. It does not refer to the order of creation or birth as Jesus was never created. It refers to his preeminent position in God’s household; that is, His respectability, supremacy, and intimacy.

The phrase “Let all . . . worship him” is a Hiphil imperative with legal implications. “All” implies angels; “Him” is the object of the action required. A Hiphil imperative means *to initiate action and to cause yourself to bow*. Angels, as well as men, are commanded to prostrate themselves before Him and to do His bidding; that is, to look to him as their Commander and Chief.

HE IS SUPERIOR IN AUTHORITY

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

The quote is from Psalm 104:4. The context of the psalm is about the greatness of God and his control over the forces of nature (and global warming).

Calvin and others found no inference to angels in the psalm. The psalm informs us that God has jurisdiction over the wild uncontrollable powers of nature, wind and fire. Thus, the writer of Hebrews deduces that since Christ is the Creator of all the forces of nature, that He also the Maker of angels and their powers.

8 But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

The quote is from Psalm 45, and it is directed at the Son. But, He is not called “the Son” in this text. Rather, He is addressed as “God” (*Elohim* in Hebrew; *Theos* in the LXX).

Psalm 45 is a Messianic Psalm and a royal wedding hymn. Enthralled with the beauty of the King, the Author of the psalm, Who can be no other than the Holy Spirit, scribes the virtues of the Bridegroom with eloquence and ease. The One “fairer than men” is addressed as “God” (*Elohim*) in verse six of the psalm.

This royal Personage sits on a throne. Much like the “oval office,” the throne is a symbol of authority and the right to rule. The one occupying the throne has the power to judge and execute the law. A distinctive feature of this throne is that it is “for ever and ever”; that is, this throne is the seat of sovereignty of the eternal God. And, the One sitting on this cathedra is not an angel, but the Son of God Who is very God of God.

The scepter is also a symbol of authority. The distinctive characteristic of this icon of power is “righteousness.” All of Israel’s kings were deeply flawed men with differing ethical perspectives in their administration. Before us is a just King on a just throne exercising just power for the good of those in His kingdom. He is not an angel, but our “brother” in the flesh—God incarnate. The One who “had no sin,” “knew no sin,” and “did no sin” sits at the right hand of the Father to mediate our concerns to Him.

HE IS SUPERIOR IN MORAL EXCELLENCE

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even thy God*, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

History is replete with kings who love property, power, and pleasure. But this king loves righteousness—a general term for justice, goodness, and mercy. To love righteousness is to love God’s law and God’s people. This is no hypocrite. He isn’t two-faced or double-tongued. Here is one with virtue flowing through His veins.

He not only loves what is right, He hates what is wrong. The word “iniquity” is “anomia” or *lawlessness* in the Greek. Christ loves the Ten Commandments. This could not be said of an angelic being. Moreover, one would be hard pressed to find kings in history that love righteousness and don’t exempt themselves from obeying God’s law.

This is not a king lusting for power, but loving righteousness. Further, this is not a permissive king flirting with sin and tolerating wickedness, but a king that despises evil. Hate is not a vice, but a virtue when it is directed against lawlessness and lawbreakers.

HE IS SUPERIOR AS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

The quote is from Psalm 102:26-28. The psalmist exhorts Israel to declare the praises of the LORD in Jerusalem (102:21) in part because He created the world (102:25) and because He is immutable (102:26). The Spirit is pleased to reveal that this appellation is directed to the Son; that is, the Son is the LORD of the Old Testament, and He is called *kurios* (Lord / Captain / Master) in the New Testament. Here the work of creation is attributed to the hands of the Creator-Son, not angels.

In the Hebrew’s quotation the pronoun “Thou” or “You” (su) is in the emphatic position emphasizing that it was the Son who was in the beginning. “In the beginning” draws us to Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” and John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word . . .” The author is telling us that Jesus is the God who created the world. He is the Author of time, of space, and matter. Thus, the Son is the Creator, and as such is exceedingly superior to the angels. Further, we can conclude that the Son is the Creator of the angels, of men, and all that we can see and not see. He was “LORD” (YHWH) to the Jews, and the “Logos” to the Greeks (John 1:1-3).

Orthodox Christianity does not worship a generic, undefined deity. It worships the Son as the LORD-Theos-Creator of all things. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Anything less is blasphemy.

HE IS SUPERIOR BECAUSE HE IS ETERNAL

11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

The “they” refers to the “heavens and earth.” Created things, even angels, age and perish. In contrast to the aging creation is the staying-power of the Son.

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

He compares the creation to a cloth that can be folded up and put on the shelf. Robes and vestures wear out, but the Son does not change, does not age, and does not deteriorate.

The earth is like a clock that is slowly running down. The Second Law of Thermodynamics applies to everything but the eternal Son. At the last tick of this chronograph, the Son remains (present tense). Unlike the angels, He is immutable, unchangeable, and eternal. The Son has no need to change for He is complete and perfect in Himself. While we have need of everything, He has need of nothing. All things are dependent on Him, but He remains independent of all things (John 1:2-3). As LORD He is the great “I AM,” the self-existent One!

HE IS SUPERIOR IN HIS HIGHLY EXALTED POSITION

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

This seventh quote is from Psalm 110:1, the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. “Sit Thou” is an imperative directed at the Son, not angels. The “right hand” implies priority, superiority, importance, power, privilege, and authority. It is a sovereign’s way of bestowing honor upon one who is victorious. This place of honor was not given to angels, but to the Son. The temporal clause “until” implies the Son will be on the throne until all His enemies are defeated; that is, He is on the throne now and will remain there to the end of time as we understand time.

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

The purpose of angels is now revealed. They are called “ministering spirits” (*leitourgika pneumata*)—a rather profane term referring to necessary but menial tasks of common, low-wage servants. The crouched place of angels as ministering servants is set in contrast to the salvific work and lofty position of the Son at the right hand of God. Their duties are connected to serving the “heirs of salvation”—but, the work of salvation is one that only the Savior-Son could achieve.

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was

steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;

The work of angels is not insignificant. In our text their words are called “steadfast” and carried with it rewards and punishment.

Infatuation with UFOs, aliens, and angels is nothing short of blasphemy when one considers the grandeur and majesty of God’s message to mankind in the Son.

So great is God’s revelation to men through His Son, the author asks a question no one has been able to answer: “How shall we escape (from judgment), if we neglect so great a salvation?”

The greatest sin of all is the neglect of the Son of God. It is the one sin that God cannot forgive.

Let us think more of Christ and less of angels; more of the Son than men; more of Morning Star than the stars of Hollywood; more of the Son’s visitation to earth than UFOs.

65. CHRIST THE FAITHFUL WITNESS

Revelation 1:5-6 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 . . .

The word “witness” and “martyr” (o` ma,rtuj) are the same word. Jesus experienced martyrdom for His witness.

Likewise, many in Asia faced the possibility of being executed by Roman authorities for their witness to the truth of the gospel and their resistance to the totalitarian State.

These Christians are encouraged to remember the One they are following: He is faithful; He is Ruler over earthly magistrates. By virtue of his death and resurrection, He is highly exalted above all earthly authority.

As “firstborn” he was the first to pass through death in the resurrected state. Therefore, because of Who He is, others will have opportunity to bear witness to His historical triumph over death and His sovereignty over the kings of the earth. If called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice, His witnesses are assured they will pass safely into the presence of God (Revelation 7).

But, there is another use of the term “witness” which is much more primary to our understanding of Jesus as a “faithful Witness.”

The Scriptural idea of a witness is one who testifies to the truth in a trial and who participates in the execution of criminals by throwing the first stone at the condemned (Deuteronomy 17:6, 7). That is, as God’s Witness, Jesus is the Executor of the wrath of God. John’s vision is one that portrays Christ not as one who has more sugar than the fairy godmother, but the Agent of justice upon rebels. This is certainly a fitting title for Christ in the Book of Revelation.

Let us not only let us worship Christ as our Savior, but the One who will execute judgment on the guilty. He is not only tender, but terrible; not only sympathetic, but severe; not only faithful, but fierce.

66. THE PRINCE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH

Revelation 1:5-6 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; And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

John informs us his letter is from “Jesus Christ.” Three more appellations enforce the authority of the letter: As a faithful witness, he not only speaks the truth, but will cast the first stone in judgement (Deuteronomy 17:7); “first begotten from the dead” means that He represents a new humanity of resurrected souls in a harvest to come; and, “prince of the kings of the earth” describe his authority over civil magistrates, parliaments, and heads of state.

“As begotten of the dead,” is a reference to Christ triumph over the grave by virtue of His death, burial, and resurrection. As victor over death, he is able to solve our fundamental problem of death. He is the first in a whole harvest to come.

As wonderful as these truths are to the soul, we want to concentrate on what the title “prince of the kings of earth” imply. America’s problems are not economic; they are spiritual; that is, they are rooted in a deficient understanding of Christ as King, and the apotheosis of the State as some kind of god that has no accountability to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When problems arise politicians do not seek to align themselves under the authority of King Jesus, rather they seek solutions through more programs, more taxation, and more regulations. The American politician thinks that if there a problem, throw money at it.

AS PRINCE

John states that Jesus Christ is “**the** prince of the kings of the earth.” The use of the definite article points out the identity of Christ in regard to the kings of the earth: He is their “prince.” He is not a prince among other princes, but **the One and Only Prince**.

The Greek word translated “**prince**” (**archon**) refers to one who is a ruler, lord, commander, or a chief governor. He is the Archon by virtue of his resurrection from the dead. The word indicates one who has authority to govern others. The root *arch* of the family of Greek words, of which *archon* is a part, refers to that which has primacy, priority, whether in time or rank. The word “prince” or “ruler” is, therefore, an excellent translation.

The English word *prince* comes from the Latin term *princeps* which means *first* or *chief*, and the primary sense of “prince” is that of a *monarch* or *king* or *governor*. Jesus Christ is the *princeps* of the kings and rulers of the earth.

AS KING

John uses the term “prince” (archon) which can be translated “chief,” “ruler,” “king,” or “Supreme Ruler.”

He is not one among many . . . for there is only one **Lawgiver** (Jam. 4:12) and one **Mediator** between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).

Jesus is the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the Potentate, the Chief Justice of Heaven’s Supreme Court, the Chief Legislator, the Commander and Chief of Heaven’s armies: For the LORD (Jesus) is our **judge**; the LORD (Jesus) is our **lawgiver**; the LORD (Jesus) is our **king**; he will save us” (Isaiah 33:22).

The critical message of Revelation is the Sovereignty of Jesus! His reign is not something in the future, but *a present reality to believe and enjoy now*. Neither Satan, nor men, nor chance govern the affairs of men.

Jesus is the Referee over all the events of history. *If we miss this truth, we miss the main message of the book*. And, it is our duty to proclaim the sovereignty of Christ and challenge civil rulers to acknowledge His authority and surrender to His law-order.

(Note: There is Satanic resistance to this truth. In America, the doctrines of “separation of church and state,” and “religion and politics don’t mix” are enough to silence most Christians in political debate. The way to overcome this is to confront their hypocrisy. They say one thing and practice another. *Every man is religious, and every law represents someone’s religious values*. The secularists use the doctrine of separation of church state to bar Christians from asserting the authority of Christ so they can force their religious values (like same-sex marriage) down the throats of Americans. We must challenge their hypocrisy and not permit them to hide behind the doctrine of separation of church and state, while they force their secular religious values upon the minds of men.)

OF KINGS OF THE EARTH

The genitival phrase, “**of** the kings of the earth,” defines His jurisdiction, the kind of power and authority He has. He is the Ruler of rulers; the Princes of princes; the Governor of governors! And, in the language of Revelation 19:16, He is the “King of kings!”

The term “king” signifies those who stand first in governing authority within a country, those who are the highest ranking magistrate in their particular nation. The words “of the earth” informs us the rulers of the world have a duty to acknowledge His authority and seek to align their administration under His authority. The kings under His rule are each and every chief magistrate in the world! And, if every chief magistrate is under His authority, then all lesser magistrates are also under His authority. He claims absolute, global, universal jurisdiction over every civil ruler (Psalm 17:1). And, He is more unyielding than an anvil.

He is not announcing Jesus’ authority over the church here, though he has authority over the church. John is not stating that Jesus is “his King,” or “my king,” or the “king” of the church.

The persons responsible to subject themselves to Prince Jesus, are kings, civil rulers, subordinates, and officers of the State, whether in the legislative, judicial, or executive branches of government. Of such, Jesus Christ is Prince — *archon*, ruler, lord, chief, the first in power, authority, and dominion.

Therefore, the statement that Jesus Christ is “the prince of the kings of the earth” is a powerful *political* title. It defines the authority of Christ in reference to political rulers and the sphere of civil government. It designates Christ as the supreme ruler of all magistrates and of all the nations of the earth.

The Scripture gives to Jesus Christ the title of “head” in reference to His absolute authority over the church (Ephesians 1:19-21). But, this is not the declaration in this text. The church is not subject to the kings of the earth nor do the kings have jurisdiction over the church. The church has its ministry (subject matter jurisdiction) of gospel proclamation under Christ as Head of the Church; and, the government has its ministry (subject matter jurisdiction) of justice under Christ as Prince of the kings of the earth.

Jesus is over all civil rulers, and all civil rulers, even those in China and the Congo, are expected to order their affairs as accountable to Him. The church can admonish kings, but it cannot command kings. Jesus commands kings. Other texts in Holy Writ utilize the title of “Lord” in other texts to communicate that He reigns over all men and aspects of life (individuals, family, church). But, this is not what John intended to communicate here. He wants the original readers to understand that Jesus has authority over the State; that He is the Ruler over all civil institutions and the persons who govern them; that officers of the State must surrender to His authority and conduct their administrations of justice under His command.

The issue, of course, is not whether Jesus is the King of kings, but will the heads of state acknowledge Him as such . . . and, herein lies the problem. Statesmen see themselves as sovereign . . . as institutions with a secular purpose rather than under a religious duty to submit to

King Jesus. As the church accepts Christ as Head of the church, all civil rulers are expected so honor the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of State in their civil administrations And, here is the rub. Churches acknowledge the Headship of Christ, but civil magistrates do not and will not acknowledge Christ as Prince of the ruler of the kings of the earth. They are in rebellion against the LORD and His anointed as Psalm 2 so accurately describes.

The New Testament title of “prince” for Jesus Christ is announced in the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. They state that Christ will be a King who will rule the kings of the earth and govern the nations: Psalm 2:1-12; Psalm 22:28; Psalm 89:27; Psalm 110:1-7; Isaiah 2:4; Isaiah 9:6-7; 33:22; Jeremiah 10:7; Daniel 7:13-14.

The New Testament also makes it clear that Jesus was installed as King of the nations at His ascension to the right hand of God: Matthew 2:2; Matthew 21:5; Matthew 27:11; John 17:2; John 19:18-20; John 19:15; Acts 2:30-36; Acts 4:12; Acts 17: 1-7; 1 Timothy 6:15.

John’s words do not suggest that at some future time Jesus will become the “prince of the kings of the earth,” **but that He is to be recognized as such NOW!** From the beginning the church has preached “that there is another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17:7); that is, there is a King who is greater than Caesar. This is the gospel that turned the world upside down, and if the church wants to do so again, it must preach Christ as King now and call civil rulers to repent and submit to Him (Acts 17:6-7).

The goal of history is the defeat of His enemies (1 Corinthians 15:24-26); that is, that all men would acknowledge Christ as Lord of the family, Lord of the churches, and King of all nations. It is the duty of all nations to confess Christ as their Ruler and King. However, the issue is not whether He is King of kings, but will men accept and confess Him as such.

HE MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS

The blessing of being a saint is mentioned. Saints are chosen, cherished, cleansed, and crowned.

- As loved ones, saints are the objects of Divine affection and favor. Christians are loved not because they are lovable, but because it is God’s nature to love.
- As cleansed ones, saints are washed and purified from sin by virtue of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- As crowned ones, saints are citizens of His kingdom (a kingdom: *basileian*, singular) by virtue of their association with Christ who sits at the right hand of the Father. The term “basilean” is translated “kings” in some versions, but the better translation is “a kingdom” with the idea of rule contained therein—not ruled, but reigning triumphant

over all enemies (Barnes, 1975); not slaves, but sovereigns sharing in the reign of the Sovereign (1 Corinthians 7:23).

- As chosen ones, saints are anointed as priests, to represent men to God. In Israel's temple there were four courts: The court of the Gentile, the court of women, the court of the Jew, and the court of the priests. The Israelites were not allowed to go into the court of priests. Due to the gospel, however, all Christians are appointed to perform the duties of a priest excelling in their influence upon history for good. The church does not have a priesthood, the church is a priesthood: As a *holy priesthood* Christians offer up praises to God; as a *royal priesthood* they proclaim His glories to men (1 Peter 2:5-11).

He “made us kings and priests” is a reference from Exodus 19:6. This is the first of many references whereby John applies images of Israel to the church:

“The regal and sacerdotal dignities are the two highest that can possibly exist among men; and these two are here mentioned to show the glorious prerogatives and of the children of God” (Clarke, 1831).

The church is a kingdom of royal priests. Thus, the church is the people belonging to Christ, the true Israel of God. John perceives the church as sharing regal authority over the nations—not under the authority of governments, but under authority of Him who has authority over the kings of the earth (2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:6).

John attributes glory to Christ for his accomplishments. Glory is fitting for Him who stooped so low, even to the death of the cross, to raise us so high as to be called priests of God. John's benediction includes increased “dominion” (*kratos* = strength) or political power. Only an all wise, all loving, all powerful, humble Savior is worthy of increased dominion.

Enough of this nonsense that Christians must always obey the government, Christians ought to be calling their government to always obey Christ!

67. THE ALPHA AND OMEGA

Revelation 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

The “I” here appears to be the voice of God the Father . . . but could very well be the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. (See 1:10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18; 22:13).

ALPHA AND OMEGA

Alpha and Omega is the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet. He is the Source and the Conclusion of history. He created all things, and by Him all things will be consummated. He is the uncaused cause, the “I Am,” the One being and existing, the perpetual beginning and ending, the everlasting eternal Being.

The Book of Revelation begins and ends with the Title, “Alpha and Omega” (22:13). Likewise, history is His story. It begins and ends with Jesus.

Therefore, you and I have the privilege of lending our hand to the ultimate goal of history, the exaltation of the Alpha and Omega.

ALMIGHTY

By this title, Abraham knew the Lord (Genesis 17:1). The LXX uses omnipotent (\omicron pantokra, *twr, pantokrator*) for the expression “Lord of Hosts.” But, to John, omnipotence is not the power of unlimited coercion, but the power of invincible love (G.B. Caird, The Revelation of St. John the Divine, 1966, p. 19).

The Hebrew word for “Almighty” is *el shadday (Shaddai)*, a masculine noun, meaning “breasted one,” an analogy referencing the powerful upper body of a male (Genesis 17:1). The idea is that of strength and power. He is the all sufficient One that can shower His people with blessing richly, abundantly, and graciously. Abraham and Sarah, being advanced in age, lacked the power to have children. But, God was almighty and could infuse power into the loins of Abraham and Sarah to birth a child . . . and they did!

Need purpose? Christ is the Alpha and Omega of history.

Need wisdom? Christ is the wisdom of God. Need strength? Christ is the power of God.

68. CHRIST, THE LAMB OF GOD

This title is only found in John's writings.

The title "Lamb of God" was not a title preached by Jesus about himself, nor was it a title used by the Apostles in their preaching in Acts.

John the Baptist assigned this title to Christ (John 1:19), and John the Apostle uses this title to describe Christ in heaven. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and it appears to be a title that only Christians can fully appreciate.

The title refers to the purpose of Jesus coming to earth. It describes His work as Redeemer, the lamb-substitute for sinners (Revelation 7:14). Furthermore, it is a reminder that the meek Jesus-Lamb will be the mighty General Who will conquer the world and bring it into subjection to the will of the Father in Kingdom consummation (Revelation 5:1ff; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

The title "Lamb of God" has a history and it is a statement of sufficiency.

There was a lamb sufficient to cover the sins of a single man (Genesis 4); a lamb sufficient to save a family from death (Exodus 12); a lamb sufficient to cover the sins of a nation (Leviticus 16); and, the Lamb who is sufficient to take away the sins of the world (John 1:19).

Jesus is called the Lamb of God because blood is necessary to cleanse sins; that is, because blood is the currency of the spirit world, Jesus had to shed His blood as the Lamb of God to pay for your ransom. No other currency is accepted by the great Spirit.

The title "Lamb of God" inspires the character of Christian ministry.

It spurs sacrificial service and a bold witness for the gospel (Revelation 12:11).

Unlike the Muslims, the Christian does not take up arms to threaten and win converts. The title is a reminder that in our witness to the world the Gladiator Gospel is proclaimed by God's attack lambs, that is, our witness is not only to be bold and persuasive but gentle and harmless. We use persuasion, not a sword (Revelation 5:1-7; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:4; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23; 22:1, 3).

69. A DESCRIPTION OF THE HIGHLY EXALTED CHRIST

Revelation 1:12-18

Revelation 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

The church's imagery was drawn from Israel's most sacred symbol. The OT candlestick had seven stems. The imagery here presents each church as a candelabrum with a purpose of shedding light on the Lord Jesus Christ. Should the light fail, the church will be removed. Each church is a trustee of the gospel, a light upon a hill. This is similar to Paul's teaching that each church is a pillar of truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

Israel's most sacred symbol was transferred to the Church of Jesus Christ. The church was appointed the stewardship of Hebrew symbols. These icons were identified with the church, the true Israel of God composed of the spiritually responsive among the Jews and the spiritually responsive among the Gentiles. Together, they form the family of God, the true Israel, the Church of Christ.

Furthermore, the "synagogue of Satan" composed of circumcised, unbelieving Hebrews had no right to claim Israel's sacred images because they rejected the gospel announced to the nation through Jesus the Messiah. It is, therefore, more appropriate for Christians to light a ceremonial candelabra than it is for Christ-rejecting "Jews" to do so. We must remember that the church is composed of true believers, Jews and Gentiles, who constitute the restored "tabernacle of David," the true Israel of God (Acts 15:15).

Revelation 1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the waist with a golden girdle.

Jesus was in the midst of the candlesticks. Theology, not anthropology, was John's grand focus. Christ, not man, occupies center stage. Enough of man in the church! Let us see the Christ of God!

John beholds the Lord Jesus Christ, not as a disembodied spirit, but Christ in his resurrected body.

He likens Him to the “Son of Man,” a title taken from Daniel’s vision (7:13ff)—a Messianic reference to the glorious apocalyptic Christ.

John described Jesus’ garments, not to give information, but to supply inspiration! John’s description of our Lord’s clothing was not a literal picture of Jesus, but a symbolic representation of Christ’s regal, judicial, legislative, priestly authority. This was King Jesus the Sovereign, crowned and glorified; Jesus, the High Priest of His people; Jesus, the Judge of All Mankind serving in the judicial temple metropolx which sheltered the great candelabra.

Revelation 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

White “like wool” suggests wisdom that comes from a righteous life. Jesus possesses greater sagacity than an Eastern sage or room full of PHDs. In Scriptural terms, “a greater than Solomon is here!” Wake up. Christ, not alleged alien invasions, is the great event of history. Furthermore, the symbol emphasizes deity—the Divine nature that the Son of Man shares with the Ancient of Days as the Second Person of the Triune Spirit (Matthew 12:42; Daniel 7:9).

His eyes like “a flame of fire” portrayed burning intensity and penetrating perception. This reference revealed Jesus’ omniscience as Judge of all mankind. He sees all and knows all—past, present, and future. Court was in session. He knew the facts in each case as well as applicable law. And, He was ready to judge all that was contrary to His holy character.

Revelation 1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

This is symbolic language, not a literal description of our Lord’s feet. Brass represents judgment (study the brazen altar). The idea is of uncompromising, unyielding integrity -- the ability to prosecute complex cases in the Supreme Court of Heaven. Quite possibly, the imagery was designed to show the strength of holiness and purity of Christ. The Holy One was ready to purify His people. As a “faithful witness,” He casts the first stone. He was serious about holiness, about love, and about the need for gospel proclamation (Deuteronomy 17:7).

The phrase, “Sound of many waters,” is imagery for unmistakable, indomitable, and commanding authority. His words command the attention of every living person, but especially in the church which is called to reverence the Word of God.

The vision of the glorified Christ was not a picture of a passive Christ sitting at the right hand of God waiting for His reign to begin. He is not some effeminate caricature sitting on a cushion of strawberries serving cotton candy to children at this circus on earth. We see a manly Christ robed

in splendor actively judging, rebuking, enabling, and rewarding His people. Judgment must begin at the house of God and He does so with bone-crushing strength (1 Peter 4:17).

Revelation 1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

The seven stars are angels, ministering spirits ready to serve the interests of Christ on behalf of the church.

He is an armed priest with praise in his mouth and a double-edged sword in his right hand (Psalm 49:6). But, there is more! He is the High Priest executing authority. Only kings leading their armies to war would be fully armed with a sword and buckle. But, Christ is a king-priest. This king-priest had a two-edged sword in His mouth, the means of His conquest. The imagery represents the Word of God that pierces, divides, and severs.

This was His only weapon, and it was sufficient to conquer the world (19:5). He speaks and it is done. He commands and all must obey. The war for dominion on earth cannot be won with military weapons, but by words—the Word of God. The war is not a physical fight, but a spiritual battle for the hearts and minds and souls of men through gospel proclamation.

Let us learn a lesson: It behooves every believer to enter the coliseum in the contest for hearts and to conquer adversaries with the Word of God. Unlike Islam, Christians do not win souls through force and intimidation, but through the art of gentle persuasion. We convince, but do not coerce. Force is the way of tyrants; “sweet reasonableness” is the way of Christ.

Humanists criticize Christians for quoting Bible verses in politics, and unfortunately many believers have laid down their swords in public debate. Let us **not** do the same. The Word of God is our only offensive weapon. Let us memorize His Word and be ready to wield its power to bring clarity to the moral issues of our time.

How can we describe the glory of Christ? John does so by comparing the brilliance of His appearance with the blistering, overpowering rays of the Sun at high noon. This was not “sweet Jesus” hugging lambs and smiling at children, but the Lord Christ with salt on his tongue and a gavel in hand.

Revelation 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

Unlike a teenager who might have said, “Wow!” or “Cool,” John fell at his feet like a dead man. Falling was not just a proper reaction to Christ. It was the only answer John could render. Any other response would have been an act of insanity⁸.

His response is an amazing reaction considering John walked with Christ for three and a half years during Jesus’ earthly ministry. During our Lord’s sojourn on earth, John never fell to the ground in stunning awe. But, when he saw His Lord in His highly exalted state in great glory and great power, fear squeezed his soul and John collapsed to the ground. So overwhelming was this scene that John had to be strengthened by a touch and a comforting word. It does not seem like much, but it was His Word and His touch.

As “first and last,” Christ reminded the original readers that He ordained life, and that He outlasted death.

What was true for the seven churches needs to be applied to us. In order to succeed in our mission, we need to see with the eye of faith the ascended Christ. *The need of the hour is a fresh vision of the Sovereign Christ in His present risen life.*

Revelation 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

The rehearsing of the history of Christ by the risen Lord was designed to provide comfort to John who was shocked and overwhelmed by the vision. Religion is ultimately about man’s fundamental problem: every man is going to die! Because Christ solved man’s fundamental problem through His death, burial, and resurrection, we have hope. John received assurance that the Christ in his vision was the same Christ he knew on earth. It was like a cold drink on a hot day to the shocked apostle.

Keys are used for unlocking doors and for solving mysteries. Keys are symbols of authority. Because Christ is the only religious and political leader that has conquered death, He alone has the keys that unlock the doors of hell and death (Isaiah 22:22). Christ, not Caesar, has the ability

⁸ The sane mind accepts the historical truth about the Lord Jesus Christ in and through His death, burial, and resurrection. The mind that rejects the Lord Jesus Christ and his historical visitation in history is an unsound, irresponsible, and a foolish mind. Politically, we call the latter, “liberalism.” Liberalism is a belief set with unsound thoughts. Liberalism is not light but darkness, a belief that “suppresses the truth in unrighteousness;” a belief system that promotes the sins of Romans one; a belief set that promotes feminism, abortion, sodomy, debt, and women in the military on the front lines. The insane are not people living in the gutter, but men and women in blue suits parading as legislators. They are people that believe that sheep and wolves can live together in the same pen; that Christianity and Islam deserve equal protection; that both are a way to God as long as you are sincere. This is insanity.

to solve the problems of mankind. Christ, not Caesar has authority over death . . . and for this reason believers serve Christ, not the State.

Christians confront the powers of darkness from a position of authority as ambassadors of Christ. Care not what man (a human judge) may say, act on His authority. Know who you are and exercise your heavenly appointment to act as His servant on earth.

In going before a federal judge, a defendant in Nevada said, “Unless your authority is greater than the authority of my Heavenly Father who endowed me with unalienable rights, I demand you release me immediately or I will be forced to arrest your bond.” The judge ordered his release (January 2008).

(Source: Stockton, Standing Firm in Tough Times, *A Commentary on Revelation 1.0*)

70. THE MEEKNESS OF CHRIST

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

There is little room for outburst of anger and rage in the Christian life.

Meekness is a Christian virtue that refers to strength under control combined with a disposition of gentleness.

Peter associates meekness with a “quiet” spirit – a sweet fragrance worn by mature saints (3:4). It is the spice of righteous men and godly women.

Our text is a quote from Psalm 37:11 where the meek are contrasted with the wicked. It appears to be synonym for the righteous. While evil men push and shove their way to power crushing the weak, the meek stand strong while waiting upon the Lord to inherit the earth.

Meekness is that attribute of human nature associated with a sweet blush, that unassuming sense of innocence, that restraint of words which promotes peace. It is the polar opposite of pride and willfulness, anger, rage, crushing power and retaliation. It is contrary to a proud, strutting half-back doing his victory dance in the end zone, or a fat, butch loud mouth “feminazi” shouting out blasphemies at an LGBTQ march on Pennsylvania Avenue.

But, don’t confuse meekness with the passive indifferent mealy mouse that heads for the cracks at the first sign of conflict.

Our Lord was meek. He was the meekest man that ever lived, but he gave strength to the weary.

Matthew 11:29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.”

2 Corinthians 10:1 “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!”

Isaiah 42:2 “He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street.

Think of how He exercised restraint while arguing with lawyers hostile to His authority.

When He entered the temple, He saw the Jewish money-changers fleecing the people and charging fees to worship God. Angry at the merchandising of His Father's house he made a whip, turned over the tables, and restored peace.

What restraint! The One Who controlled lightning and thunder could have used his power to taser the banksters, to turn them into charcoal or to vaporize them quid pro quid. He could have called a legion of angels down to afflict them with boils and carbuncles. But, He didn't. He simply made a whip and overturned the teller's benches. There is no evidence anyone received a lashing. Our Lord Jesus acted vigorously, but not maliciously.

Think of how our Lord responded at his all-night trial. He was standing before a corrupt court that broke all the court rules of the Sanhedrin. There was no justice or truth in this midnight session. The verdict was a forgone conclusion. The only question was how to issue the verdict and the sentence under color of process. Our Lord could have showed his power and force, but he acted with amazing restraint—no words, no yelling, no displays of anger. He suffered meekly.

While sweet Jesus can also be bone-crushing Jesus, it is a good thing He does not give us what our sins deserve.

Praise God for His restraints, and may we possess that richness of character called meekness that promotes peace and good will among men.

71. THE LAMB AND THE SCROLL

“The final vision of the universe,” says William Barclay, “is a universe praising Christ; and it is our privilege to lend our voices and our lives to this vast chorus of praise, for chorus is necessarily incomplete so long as there is one voice missing from it.”

In eternal glory, all will be occupied with the greatness of Another and will sing: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

Revelation 5:1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

The theater in which this drama unfolds is the Courtroom of Heaven. The One seated in glory and majesty upon the throne is none other than the Sovereign LORD God Almighty. In a rare and precious moment, and with unparalleled skill, John the revelator draws our attention to a scroll held in the right hand of His Majesty – a scroll sealed with seven seals.

Record sealing is the process of removing from general review the records pertaining to a court case or the conclusion of a matter. The practice seeks to balance the interest of testator with the freedom of parties from the burdens that may be contained in the sealed document.

There are many theories as to what this scroll represents. The best is that this scroll is the Last Will and Testament of the Living God, which orders the events of history and the ushering in of His eternal kingdom. In the Roman world the “Last Will and Testament” was sealed with seven seals and was witnessed by seven witnesses. The execution of a will assumed the death of the testator; and while God does not die, early Christian faith made much of the idea of the inheritance of believers. Viewed in this way, the scroll is the symbol of the promised kingdom which was sealed but not executed (1 Peter 1:4). The scroll is God’s redemptive plan for the denouncement of human history, the overthrow of evil, and the gathering of a redeemed people into the kingdom of God. This is no small task. Who can possibly administrate such a grand plan?

Ezekiel’s scroll is important here (Ezekiel 2): His scroll was full of woe, lament, and mourning. It had writing on both sides suggesting fullness of judgment. The fact that the scroll had writing on both sides may represent heaven’s perspective on one side and earth’s perspective on the other. The scroll is sealed. This is a courtroom. Court is in session. The judge has a sealed, legal

document, the contents of which are hidden from the public. We are left to ponder, “What’s in the scroll?”

Augustine’s City of God saw history as following God’s redemptive plan which will culminate in God’s kingdom. Out of the “enlightenment” emerged optimistic man who envisioned the utopian State – Disneyland without a church on Main Street. Evolutionists see the progress of mankind. Pragmatic legalists seek to create a perfect society through law; that is, to regulate man to perfection – the more regulations the better society will become. Some claim we cannot even know the meaning and goal of history; that it is going in circles. The fact that the scroll is sealed may infer that Christ alone has the key to the meaning of history. The scroll in His right hand contains the fate and meaning of history.

Revelation 5:2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

Immediately after seeing the Eternal One with book in hand, a prominent angel challenged heaven and earth and hell with the interrogatory, “Who is worthy (able) to break the seals and open the scroll?”

The strong angel asks the question, not because he does not know the answer, but that men might ponder the question and be instructed.

The solemnity of the moment shuts every mouth. A strange silence fills the room. John listened intently. John is no longer seated in the audience; he has become an actor, a participant on stage in this pageant. He is a man, but more than a man. John is the Seer of Patmos. He knows it. He understands he has been given a privilege rarely bestowed on the rarest of holy men. He knows he is God’s spokesman in the crisis that has befallen the seven churches. He is standing on stage before the Fountain Head of Knowledge and knows he must gain perspective for himself and the churches he loves.

Revelation 5:3-4 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

In the silence, John struggles with the meaning of the vision and the angelic challenge. The apostle feels deeply that it is His prophetic duty to do something. He can’t stand idly by in this emergency and do nothing. John is an Israelite that believed God must right wrongs upon the earth. He is God’s man and says to himself, “This is my experience. I have seen heaven’s throne and I heard the Leviathan challenge. My authority is based on my experience in the presence of Almighty God. Listen to me!”

At this moment in this drama John makes an observation: of all the wise men that had ever lived, and of all the kings that had ever reigned, and of all the military generals that had ever organized a campaign, no champion could be found among men worthy to accept the summons. Swelling with emotion, John burst into tears. His weeping breaks the silence in the Courtroom. What a cosmic crisis! John identifies fully with the struggle of humanity and the want of righteous men among us. He “wept much!” This is John’s way of telling us that even the best among us has failed. All are weak. All are frail. All have sinned. There is none righteous, no not one. Man stands in need of a Redeemer, a Savior, and a fearless Champion that can execute the will of Almighty God!

In his weeping, the seer of Patmos reveals his pastor’s heart. This is no hireling who flees when the thief cometh. He is truly God’s man for the seven churches of Asia Minor. His plight is a plight in which all good pastors find themselves. John’s crying reveals the anguish in his heart. He grieves over the failures of mankind. He doesn’t know what to do. The problems of the seven churches are not illusory. They are real and terrifying. He loves his people. He hurts for them, and he can’t leave them. He wants to provide relief for their suffering, but he has no remedy.

Through the agony and tears of his distress, he was compelled to search for the meaning of the suffering of the saints in Asia Minor. Tired, with callouses on his knees and cuts on his hands, he carries the burden of these churches in his heart. Pastor John is perplexed. He doesn’t know what to do . . . or what to say to comfort his people. He has no power to solve the problems of his flock. He weeps much.

Revelation 5:5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

God’s prophet is rewarded for his anguish over the churches. “Stop weeping,” ordered a courtier. “Look” advises the presbyter. There is one . . . one man in history that has not sinned and who has the authority to take the scroll, break the seals, and execute the will of God. “Look,” shouts the presbyter. “See” the Champion. He is the King of Beasts, the Lion from the Tribe of Judah, David’s Greater David, the descendant of the Giant Slayer, Who is called “Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.” He was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Galilee, and challenged the powers of three governments in Judea. He was in the Beginning with God and was God. He has marched against our enemies and conquered them by virtue of his historical accomplishments at the cross. He is able to open the Scroll.

John now sees what an exalted place the historical Christ plays in this drama and the destiny of history.

The Jesus he knew on earth is the Lion King in this dramatic play. Jesus is not a supporting actor, but the central figure of history! He is not just a king, but the King. Jesus is not just a man or a misunderstood teacher or one of many religious teachers. Jesus is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega, Savior and Lord in this pageant. He is the Judge on the throne in this Court.

With great skill John informs us that Christianity is not based on subjective speculations about salvation like all the superfluous religions of mankind. Salvation is deeply rooted in Messianic history in, though, and by Israel's Lion King. Hope for eternal life, in light of Adam's fall, is grounded on the literal, physical, material, historical death, burial, and resurrection of Israel's Messiah. Judah was called a baby lion (a lion's whelp), and now John shines the spotlight on the majesty of the King of Beasts, the root of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Revelation 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

John narrates the story, but he is also an actor in the pageant. Turning to see this Regal Creature, John beholds a little Lamb standing in the middle of the throne. John expects to see the Victor, but he sees a Victim. The Champion is announced as a Lion, but He is seen as a Lamb. Five wounds mar His frame. As an Israelite familiar with the Old Testament, John expected God to right all wrongs and to judge sinners. Now, the prophet gains insight into how God begins to set things straight and to right the wrongs of history. The Victim of the cross is the Victor with a crown.

Redemption is not accomplished by mere might alone, but by mercy and grace. It was not by the throne, but by the cross Christ atoned for sin. The redemptive love of God made the shed blood of the Lamb the means of salvation. In this manifestation of grace there was released in history the greatest power that humanity can ever know. It was not the Lamb in His pristine beauty that won salvation, but the Lamb in his weakness, the sacrificed Lamb in His bloody ordeal at the cross that saves souls, that saves humanity from complete decay.

Conquest over the world is not accomplished by unlimited coercion, but by the invincible power of the Lamb's sacrificial love. Out of love, He left heaven's glory and faced the judgment of the cross for us. His wounds provide evidence that the price was paid, that redemption is complete. His precious blood is the consideration exchanged for the performance of a promise. John is telling us that blood is the currency of the spirit world; that the price of redemption has been paid; that it is love that saves sinners; love (blood) that cleanses men; love that justifies and sanctifies; love that transports weary sinners off the volcanic island of Adam's sin to Heaven's

peaceful shores; love that enables struggling pilgrims to endure the hostility of sinners in their journey to the City of God.

Judah was a lion's whelp, and the lion was a Messianic figure in Jewish literature. The emphasis is on the salvation of God's people (Isaiah 11:9), not on individual salvation alone. Christ's victory is over Satan, sin, and death. It is over principalities and powers. It is over Roman legions and arrogant Caesars. It is over all our struggles with proud and evil men. Man's need is not more law, or more effort to do better, or more work performed in order to be better and greater. Man needs a Champion who will rescue the weak and weary. That Champion . . . that Redeemer is God's Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ!

John is not telling us that Christ will reign over mankind, but that he is already installed as Messianic King (Hebrews 1:3). Instead of telling his readers that Christ sits at the right hand of God, John paints a picture with the brush of his pen. He is an artist not an engineer. The future and final victory of Messiah is but an extension of the rule He now enjoys by virtue of the victory already won. In the end, He will destroy all rule and power (I Corinthians 15:25-26).

A horn is a symbol of strength. The *seven horns* represent the Lamb's fullness of power. The *seven eyes* denote Christ's omniscience, perception, intensity, and intelligence (Ezekiel. 4:10). Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Together, the seven horns and seven eyes represent the Spirit of God. They do not refer to seven different spirits, but to the completeness and sufficiency of the Spirit. The Spirit is inseparable from Christ because the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him (Colossians 2:8-10).

We see the characteristics of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:2-3:

- The Spirit of the Lord
- The Spirit of wisdom
- The Spirit of understanding
- The Spirit of counsel
- The Spirit of power
- The Spirit of Knowledge
- The Spirit of the fear of the Lord

Before John is the Holy Trinity, the Spirit of God proceeding from the Lamb, and the Lamb proceeding from the Father. This is John's way of confirming "the Comforter is come, whom I

will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26).

Revelation 5:7-8 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts 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.

What kind of person would dare approach the Judge in this Court and take this prized scroll out of His hand? Before us is a dramatic imagery depicting perfect harmonious interaction between the Father and the Son. With the gauntlet thrown down, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to lose the seals thereof?” Heaven’s Champion steps forward, takes the scroll, and accepts the mission.

This is no ordinary lamb. When the Lamb stands up angelic hosts fall down. One day all of creation will fall prostrate at his feet. Some will do so willingly and gladly. Others will bow under the power of His Sovereignty. With instruments in hand and hearts in tune, heaven erupts with thunderous praise to the Lamb. Until the final battle, heaven decorates their Champion with refrains of abounding praise. The first war and last war in Scripture is about worship. Join the winning side and worship the Lamb! Bow the knee today, and you will stand with Him tomorrow (Romans 10:9, 10: Psalm 97).

This scene supports the view that the elders and beast are angels. Pictured are angels with harps. The instruments of praise provide sweet sounds for the ears. Vials are opened and sweet perfumes delight the senses. The bottles of perfume are the prayers of the saints. The term “saint” is broader than “converted Jews.” It encompasses the whole family of God where there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: but all are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

72. WORTH IS THE LAMB

John takes us into Heaven's Courtroom to Behold the Lion-Lamb that we might understand that history is in the hands of the Redeemer-Champion.

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 was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

“A new song” is a fresh song composed for this special occasion — a new world order based on God's Law-word (Isaiah 42:9). The Kingdom is about to be inaugurated. New names are given (2:17; 3:12); new songs are sung (5:9ff); a new heavens and a new earth are created (21:1); and, all things are made new (21:5).

The term “slain” is only used in the apocalypse and it is a reference to Isaiah 53:6. The word “ransom” means “to purchase.” The background is the picture of a slave being purchased from the market place with sums of money. The objects of purchase are men from every tribe, language, people and nation.

The Lamb is worthy of worship because of who He is (5:6). He is the Lion-Lamb, the Man of steel and velvet. He had “seven horns” which testify to His complete power. He had “seven eyes” which speak of His superior wisdom. It is the integrity of the Lamb that qualifies Him for the task. Not only does He know what to do, He has the power to do it, and the character to sustain it.

The Lamb is worthy of worship, because of the work He did (Revelation 5:9): He is the slain Lamb whose throat was cut. The metaphor is intended to remind the reader of the Lamb whose blood was smeared on the doorpost to protect families from the death angel who struck all the firstborn of Egypt on the night of the Passover. It was not the Babe in Bethlehem, nor the Prophet on the mount, but the slaughtered Lamb that accomplished redemption. It is not the crown, but the cross that gains the sinner's freedom. It is his death, not his life, which makes a prince out of a pauper, a king out of a slave. Is it any wonder the courtiers of heaven burst into accolades of praise singing, “Thou art worthy?” Elegantly crowned and luxuriously robed are those who have been rescued by the Champion, the Lion-Lamb.

The Lamb is worthy of worship because of the wealth He possesses: “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the number of them was ten thousand

times ten thousand; saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing’ ” (5:1).

Revelation 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Textual variances in this verse impact the interpretation. Some MSS have a present tense. But the verb is an aorist. The “us” should be translated “they.” The NASB has it correct: “Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God . . .” The phrase “shall reign” should be translated “they shall reign on the earth.” The tense is a present tense with a future usage (Robertson). In the Lamb’s triumph, the people of God share in the benefits of conquest now in a firstfruits way. The consummation awaits the arrival of the kingdom of God in history.

This is the second time in the book John refers to the people of God as a royal priesthood. The presbytery is still speaking. They are praising God for His marvelous accomplishments. He took the redeemed, made them a kingdom, and appointed them priests; and “They shall reign on the earth for a thousand years” (20:6). Peter called the church a “royal priesthood.” The people of God are not ones over whom He reigns, but people who actually share in His triumph and exaltation. To share in his reign means the people of God can enjoy the benefits of His rule now. Furthermore, the people are made priests. Being a priest refers to the Priesthood and the privilege of access to God. Any suggestion the reign of the saints belongs only to the future is negated by the fact the redeemed are called kings and priests now.

The significance of the song is that Christ has brought into existence a new humanity—a redeemed people by His shed blood on the cross. Therefore, his redemptive work must include the breaking of the seals, and the opening of the scroll so that the Kingdom may be established and promises fulfilled. In breaking the seals, both salvation and judgment are revealed.

73. THE SEVENFOLD INSCRIPTION OF CHRIST

Revelation 5:11-12 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

John continues to narrate the story. From the Greek word “number” (arithmos) we obtain the word “arithmetic.” The word for “thousands” is “myriads” which specifies a countless number above ten thousand.

The seven churches learn that their small, weak work will be successful and as result of their sacrifice an incalculable number of people will come into the fold and join this choir of praise to honor the glorious Lamb. Before us are not impoverished saints crushed by Roman imperialism, but happy victors praising their Lion King.

The word “worthy” is the Greek word *axios*. In classical Greek, the term was used to describe a coin that balanced the opposing weight on the scales. In balancing the scale, the coin was called “fitting” or “worthy” as consideration in the purchase. Thus, our Lord measured up to the Herculean task of redemption; that is, redemption called for a righteous man, a perfect man—a powerful man who could defeat sin, Satan, and death. Christ was fitted for the task. He achieved what no other man could achieve.

Thus, in balancing the scales of justice, Heaven’s throng breaks out into accolades of praise that focus on His worth. Only our Lord could balance the scale. Our ascription of worth does not make Him worthy. He is worthy by virtue of Who He is and What He accomplished in history. And, in a mindless world, it is the privilege of the saints to contemplate Christ as an asset. All life is an act of receiving. However, in worship men give to Him, not to enrich Him, but to delight in Him. The great question is not whether the Lamb is worthy, but will men esteem Him as such. When His redeemed ones realize His worth, and acknowledge this with harmonized hearts, He is honored and they become whole.

The following is a seven-fold inscription of Christ’s worth that only the redeemed can sing. The virtues are arranged under a single article (the) indicating that they are a complete aggregate belonging to God and the Lamb.

His Power: The Lord showed his power by commanding winds and seas to obey Him; by turning water into wine; by multiplying the loaves and fishes; by raising Lazarus from the dead.

But, He also restrained His power. When struck by the soldiers, He gave His back to be a plowed field. He permitted soldiers to bind him to the cross and strip him of His clothing. He could have called legions of angels to His assistance, but He did not. The exercise of His meekness might cause some to wrongly conclude that Christ was weak. Lambs are weak. But, this Lamb restrained his power in order to defeat the Father of Lies and to break the vice-grip of death by virtue of His death, burial, and resurrection. Obedient unto death, the Father raised Him from the dead and granted him all authority as Son and Heir of the Father's kingdom.

Lord Acton once said, "Power corrupts; and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Few men can be trusted with power. The Napoleons and Stalins of this world have demonstrated this too often. But, our Lord is able to handle power and use it for good. Because He is good and wise, He can be trusted with all power. "The scepter of universal sovereignty is held in a nail-pierced hand." Thou art worthy, O Lamb, to receive power.

His Riches: As the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the wealth of heaven and earth are His. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge coalesce in Him. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He fashioned gold and silver by His spoken word: "Let the dry land appear, and it was so." And, He is not only rich, He is the Great Giver. He uses His wealth to better the lives of others. The Lamb became poor that we might be made rich. He tasted poverty below that we might dwell in luxury above. We were dressed in rags of unrighteousness, but He clothed us with the white linen of righteousness. Paul announces that in the gospel we are blessed with "all spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3). Thou art worthy, O Lamb, to receive riches.

His Wisdom: Education does not make a man wise. Educated people are often the biggest fools⁹ on the planet. Wisdom is the correct use of knowledge. Not only does Christ have all knowledge, but He has all wisdom. Creation is assigned to Him. By His wisdom He spoke the stars into existence . . . and earth with its lava core, cool crusts, mountains, and oceans; and, He created all the animals; and man who is "wonderfully made." Who has not marveled at the engineering of the human thumb, or eye, or ear or the laminin—those microscopic bio-proteins that downloads information to each cell assigning each its own unique function? We are born totally ignorant and have to grow in knowledge. Our Lord has never learned anything. He is the wellspring of all knowledge. In eternity, we will all confess that everything we learned was from Him. Thou art worthy, O Lamb, to receive wisdom.

⁹ "Reader, suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress, But I repeat myself." —Mark Twain

His Strength: As humans, we face constant demands; either, we do not know what to do (lack of wisdom), or we do not have the ability to do it (a lack of strength). Most men don't know how to be millionaires. Of those that do, most do not have the investment capital to run a business entity that could create such wealth. Christ not only knows what to do, He has the ability and means and resources to save men from sin and to make them de jure members of the kingdom of God. Omnipotence rests in the bosom of a gentle Sage. Thou art worthy, O Lamb, to receive strength.

A Christian was once criticized for his faith. "The trouble with you Christians," mocked the critic, "is that you use Jesus Christ as a crutch." "You've got it all wrong," responded the believer, "He's my whole wheelchair."

His Honor: When Christ was on earth in His trial before King Herod, Luke informs us that Herod's brute police force "set him at naught (nothing)" (Luke 23:11). Before Herod's court was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the King of the Nations—the most perfect, pure man that ever walked the earth. Having weighed him in their balances, they considered Him as dust on the scales, a big fat zero.

Herod honored wealth, but Christ was just a poor rabbi from Galilee. Herod honored political power, but the Indicted exercised no authority in the Roman political system. In fact, our Lord wasn't even a Roman citizen. Herod honored strength and power, but Christ sat in shackles silent as a lamb. Herod estimated Christ's value as "nothing." But, to the Christian, Christ is our Everything!! Our Alpha and Omega, our All in all! Our risen Lord has ascended to the right hand of the Father and now reigns as Lord of lords and King of kings. The issue of course, is not whether Christ is the Central Figure of History, but whether men will recognize Him as such . . . or esteem His value as nothing.

The One Who was heaven's praise, was cursed among men. He who is crowned with glory before the angels was marked with a crown of thorns here below. The One whose holy train fills the temple and caused the angels to shout, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty," was stripped of his clothing on earth and beaten with a Cat o' nine tails. The One who represents the perfections of Almighty God was rejected by men, condemned to death, and sentenced to a criminal's fate.

Thou art worthy, O Lamb, to receive honor. Isaiah says of him, "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" (Isaiah 53:6).

Fortunately, John the Seer sets the record straight. Some men deserve honor for what they know. Others for what they do or for what they are. Christ deserves honor because of all three reasons.

He stooped so low and lost so much in order that we might be raised higher and gain more. He is worthy of honor and it is our privilege to lend our voices to this heavenly chorus.

His Glory: In coming to earth, our Lord divested Himself of His royal robes of majesty. The One Who littered heaven with His glories, emptied Himself to become a man. Without complaint, He endured the hardships of being a man. There was “no beauty that we should delight in Him.” Heaven’s Ambassador, He endured humiliation, ridicule, and insult among men in order to complete the task of redemption. Despite the difficulty of His mission, the Son was obedient unto death, even the death and shame and indignity of the cross.

At the cross, “he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken of God and afflicted.” Out of the shame and ordeal of the cross He satisfied the claims of Divine justice and became our salvation! By His stripes we are healed. The despised Christ of history is heaven’s Glory and heaven’s Prize. Thou art worthy, O Lamb, to receive honor (Isaiah 53:1-6; Philippians 2:5-12).

His Blessing: The word “blessing” means “a good word” or “praise.” He taught us to bless and not curse, to love and not hate, and to give and not steal. He cursed no man. He could say to a bereaved father and mother, “Weep not,” and then proceed to raise their daughter off a sick bed. In the midst of death and grief, Christ announced that He is “the resurrection and the life.” Then Lazarus bounded out of the tomb to the astonishment and comfort of family and friends. Jesus even prayed for the forgiveness of soldiers who nailed Him to the tree. He gave all and took nothing. Yet among men, He received the curse. Among pagans, His name is a common swear word. But, among the redeemed His name is associated with all that is sweet, tender, and good. “Jesus,” there is something about that name, the sweetest name I know. Thou art worthy, O Lamb, to receive blessing (Luke 8:52).

Revelation 5:13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

The song addresses the Lamb and the One on the throne. Here are the raw materials for Trinitarian Theology. John, a solid monotheist, ascribes worship to the Lamb and to the One on the throne. Because of this kind of language in Scripture the church framed Trinitarian Theology: “one God existing in three persons.”

The whole of creation joins in singing the new song. The poetic language describes the universality of the redemption accomplished by Christ. We are never more whole than when we sing of the glories of Christ.

Sane people, as did Thomas, examine the claims of Christ. This disciple demand claim with strict proof of claim. Using the rules of evidence to investigate the Case for the Resurrection, Thomas conclude that He is “Lord” and “God.” It is an act of insanity to reject Him. This Pastor from Patmos comforts the seven churches and informs them that their work in the Province of Asia was not in vain; that it was a vital stanza in the composition of the gospel melody resonating through history; that it added to heaven’s mission which is the honor and glory of Him that sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever more.

Revelation 5:14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

All of heaven breaks into praise and adoration of the Almighty and the Lamb. These majestic creatures in heaven model for us how we should respond on earth to the glories of Christ. Praise glorifies God, and beautifies us. Praise is the reason for our existence. Our whole purpose on earth is to be a creature in God’s choir and add to the adorations of the One on the throne.

Praise is a return on the Father’s investment for our salvation in and through His Son. When we praise God, we fulfill our reason for being. Heaven loves it; the Devil hates it. Praise is to God, what complaining is to the Devil . . . and it is praise that releases His power to show us the salvation of God (Psalm 50:23).

Agno dum Spiro Jubilate

(As long as I have breath, I will rejoice in the Lamb).

74. THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD

Part I

CHRIST, THE TRUE ISRAEL

Today, many Christians are caught up with the “other Israel”— the Ashkenazi “Jews” who have occupied the ancient land of Israel by military power since 1948.

In dispensation circles, you will find Christians fascinated with end-time schemes of a Jewish return to Palestine.

However, the New Testament is strangely silent about a restored geo-political Israel to the Holy Land.

This belief about an end-time restoration of the nation of Israel to Palestine to replace the church in God’s eschatological program is called the *sin qua non* of dispensationalism.

In reality, it is nothing more than a “Jewish Myth” (Titus 2:14).

These believers have failed to grasp that ancient Israel is merely a type or shadow of Jesus, the True Israel of God, and his “called out” ones, the church, who could be called a “New Israel,” or “spiritual Israel” (Romans 9:6; Galatians 5:12-14; Ephesians 2:10ff).

Christ is wonderfully greater than any of us truly know!

Christ is the True Israel of God, and His destiny is our destiny.

Let’s begin with grasping the prophecy in Matthew 2:14-15. There is no verse in the Old Testament that specifically says that Jesus would go into Egypt, and return again to this holy theater.

*Matthew 2:14-15 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt . . . and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “**Out of Egypt I called my son.**”*

This prophecy is a reference to Hosea 11:1, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” This verse is about God calling geo-political Israel out from slavery under Pharaoh during the Exodus. So, how can it be applied to Jesus Christ?

What makes this a prophecy is that Jesus is the True Israel, the fulfillment of the hopes attached to geo-political Israel; that is, geo-political Israel became a shadow or type of Christ. Their history is His history. His history must in some way parallel the fundamental events of the history of the nation. Or, we could put it another way: the nation must reflect the history of the True Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, their history reflects the life and death of our Lord.

Matthew reasoned that since Israel was called out of Egypt, Christ also must be called out of Egypt . . . and He was! Or, since Christ was called out Egypt, earthly Israel had to be called out of Egypt . . . and they were (Exodus 10-14).

The term *Israel* means “*prince with God.*”

The nation took its name from Jacob who was renamed “Israel.”

The nation was promised that they would be God’s special treasure. (Exodus 19:5). But, the promise was based on Israel’s obedience. As history unfolded and Israel disobeyed God’s laws, *she forfeited her right to the promises!*

But, God provided *a new Prince*. Jesus obeyed the law. He prevailed. He followed His Father all the way to the cross.

Because Jesus obeyed God’s law perfectly, He became God’s special treasure and inherited all of Israel’s promises.

All who place their faith in Christ as their Representative join the Messianic community, and they become a member of the New Israel, the true people of God.

Part II

HOW CHRIST IS THE TRUE ISRAEL

Was Israel called YHWH’s “firstborn?” Jesus is God’s firstborn (Colossians 1:15-16).

Was Israel delivered out of Egypt? Jesus was brought up out of Egypt (Matthew 2:15).

Did Israel pass through the waters of the Red Sea and through the River Jordan to enter the land of Canaan to take possession of Canaan (Joshua 3)? Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan and later passed through the rivers of death and emerged victorious to take possession of all things at right hand of the Father in heaven (Romans 6:7-8; Acts 2:30-32).

Was Israel tested in the wilderness for 40 years? Jesus was tested in the wilderness of Judea for 40 days . . . and by the prince of demons.

Was Israel supposed to obey God's law? Christ not only obeyed the law, He is the perfection and Source of Law (Romans 10:4).

Did Israel have the Torah? Jesus is *the Living Torah*, the subjective expression of the objective, written law.

Unlike Israel who failed God's time of testing, Christ fulfilled the law. He accomplished Israel's obligations to God. He did what Israel did not do.

In his life, **He was Israel's Representative.** As Israel's Representative, He **fulfilled Israel's covenant responsibilities to God.**

In His death, **He was Israel's Representative.** As Israel's Representative, He removed the curse of covenant breaking by becoming a curse for them (Galatians 3:1-14).

In his glorification at the right hand of the Father, **He is true Israel's Representative.** As true Israel's Representative He represents all who trust Him. All believers in the True Israel of God (Christ) share in the glory and blessing of his covenant accomplishments.

Not only is Christ Israel's Representative and means of obeying God's law for them; **He is God's Representative (Mediator)**, the means or locus of covenant blessings promised to Israel by God if they obeyed Him.

So, in Christ, believing Jews become members of the spiritual Israel (true Israel or the New Israel which is composed of Christ and the community of the redeemed—Romans 9:6). Likewise, believing Gentiles become members of the spiritual Israel, the community of the redeemed. Ancient Jews were “in Israel,” believers are said to be “in Christ” the new Israel of God (Matthew 8:19; Romans 8:1).

Did Israel enter their inheritance in Canaan? Following Jesus' second baptism of suffering and blood, He entered into glory, heaven itself, the prototype of the Promised Land. Those who believe in him enter the Land of Salvic Promises.

Unlike Israel, who complained in the wilderness, Jesus said, “Not my will, but thy will be done” (Matthew 26:42).

Is Israel the seed of Abraham? Jesus is not only the physical Seed of Abraham, He shared Abraham's spiritual faith. In fact, He is the Object of the faith of Abraham. He is God Almighty in Whom Abraham trusted (Genesis 17:1ff).

Matthew presents Jesus as the *True Seed of Abraham* (Chapter one). Christ is the One through whom the world is to be blessed. Matthew closes his book with Jesus' command to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. If Jesus is the One through whom the promise is being fulfilled, then He can lawfully lay claim to being Abraham's true descendant—the true Israel of God. *Jesus is the true Israel because He did everything Israel was supposed to do* (Galatians 3:14).

Did Israel produce the great King David? Matthew presents Jesus as the Son of David. He is great David's greater David. As Israel's king, Christ reigns as King over true Israel He is the fulfillment of the Davidic promises (Matthew 1:1ff).

Did Israel preserve its records and genealogies of kings? Jesus is a fulfillment of the promised seed all the way back to Eve . . . Noah . . . Abraham . . . David . . . to Mary and Joseph.

From our perspective, Jesus' genealogy makes him the last Hebrew to whom we can honestly trace ancestry. No living so called "Jew" today can trace his own lineage back to Abraham or even to a bonafide Hebrew. *Even if a Jew claimed to be the Christ in the future, there is no way to verify his claim.* But with Christ, there is no legal problem verifying His lineage. His genealogy is preserved as legal proof that He was a Hebrew of Hebrews by Matthew and Luke.

Was Israel called the "servant of the Lord" (Isaiah 41:8)? Jesus is called the "Servant of the Lord" and "the Arm of the Lord" (Matthew 12:18; Isaiah 53).

Did Israel have a covenant with God? Jesus was made a "covenant" for the people. In Isaiah (42:1ff), distinguishing between the Messianic Servant and Israel as the Servant is at times difficult to determine. Isaiah obviously intended for us to understand the Servant of the Lord as the true Israel in covenant with God the Father.

Did Israel have angels, Moses, Joshua, a priesthood, a temple, a covenant, and animal sacrifices? Jesus, as the true Israel, is the true prophet, true Joshua, true priesthood, true temple, true covenant, and true sacrificial lamb!

CHRIST IS THE NEW TORAH – THE LIVING TORAH

The Torah was a true but incomplete expression of God's righteousness; Jesus is the perfect and complete expression of God's righteousness. The law was an objective representation of God's character; Jesus is God's subjective Representation of His character. Jesus is the Living Torah,

the Perfect Reflection of God's attributes. Only Jesus could say, "But I say unto you . . ." as One with *de jure* authority (Matthew 5). He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17).

CHRIST IS THE NEW JOSHUA (Hebrews 4)

General Joshua led Israel to a temporary victory in Canaan over the Late Bronze Canaanites. Jesus as the New Commander of God's people gives the true people of God eternal rest in the House of God.

CHRIST IS THE NEW PRIESTHOOD (Hebrews 5-7)

OT priests worked day and night in the ministry of reconciliation. Despite all the priests, and all the work, and all the sacrifices offered, those priests with their sacrifices were unable to perfect the people of God. But, Jesus, a Priest in the Order of Melchizedek, has succeeded in interceding for true Israel based of his superior ministry, superior covenant, superior sacrifice, and superior priesthood (Hebrews).

CHRIST SERVES IN A NEW TEMPLE

Aaron served in the earthly tabernacle, but Christ serves as a Priest of the people in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 8-9). He is the temple of God (John 2).

CHRIST IS THE NEW SACRIFICE

Every year thousands of lambs, goats, and bulls were offered on the brazen altar. But, none of them or the whole of them could take away sin. But, Christ's one sacrifice covers sins forever; cleanses the conscience forever; and perfects the elect forever (Hebrews 9, 10). Blood is the currency of the spirit world. Because of His "precious blood," we have been redeemed forever.

CONCLUSION

Christ is the meaning of the Old Testament. All the types, all the promises, all the demands of moral law find their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam, Moses, the exodus, the sacrifices, the feasts, the law, the priesthood, the offerings, and the temple are shadows (tipos) of a greater reality. He is the Prototype of all Israel's symbols, promises, and icons.

2 Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

In other words, the tabernacle, the law, and the shadows do not come first, but second in the Divine mind. All reflect First Principles which is Christ Himself. He is First Who is before all things, that He might have preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:15-18).

Stressing a future hope for that carnal thing called the “other Israel” over in Palestine today is devoid of mature understanding of the greatness of our Lord. Man’s hope is not in some “resurrected” ancient, geo-political Israel or a blood moon, but in Christ the True Israel of God . . . and His people, the New Israel of God, the true commonwealth of the Promises.

For Christians to be focused on a restored Jewish Israel in the Holy Land is a faith failure to grasp the greatness and wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ as the True Israel of God.

Those stressing a revived Israel simply don’t understand how great Christ really is and the wonder of being a part of the true church, the community of the Redeemed.

There is no hope in a rebuilt temple or a resurrection of the Jewish nation. Man’s hope is in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the wonder of redemption He accomplished at the cross.

If we are going to boast, let us boast in Christ and the cross, not in some end-time super scheme about a revived geo-political Israel.

*Galatians 6:14-16 But God forbid that **I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them (Christians), and mercy, and upon the Israel of God (the Christian Church).*

75. THE SWEETNESS OF JESUS' NAME

How *sweet* the Name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It *soothes* his sorrows, *heals* his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit *whole*,
And *calms* the troubled breast;
'Tis *manna* to the hungry soul,
And to the weary, *rest*.

Dear Name, the *Rock* on which I build,
My *Shield* and *Hiding Place*,
My never failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of *grace*!

Jesus! my *Shepherd*, **Savior**, *Friend*,
My **Prophet**, *Priest* and **King**,
My *Lord*, my **Life**, my *Way*, my **End**,
Accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Till then I would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath,
And may the music of Thy Name
Refresh my soul in death!

by John Newton (writer of Amazing Grace)

76. CHRIST OUR KINSMAN REDEEMER

“And Boaz said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a kinsman redeemer (goel)” — Ruth 3:9.

The wonderful Book of Ruth, like all the Old Testament Scriptures, showcases the glories of Christ our Redeemer.

The Old Testament is filled with shadows and types of our precious Savior in the form of characters like Boaz, objects like the menorah, and historical events like the redemption of Ruth.

What Boaz was to Ruth, Christ is to us—our Kinsman Redeemer (goel).

The key word in the Book of Ruth is the word “kinsman” (*mowda*). It is used four times (2:1, 20; 3:9, 12; 4:6, 14). It refers to a near relative that has the legal right and the financial power to redeem the property and status of a family member from the ravages of poverty.

Leviticus 25:25 If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.

Adam, the father of the human race, sold us into bondage and sin; but Christ, our near kinsman, the Logos made flesh, the God-man, truly God and truly man, saw the condition of sinners, heard their pleas, and paid the price for their freedom.

Romans 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Like Ruth the Moabitess was an alien to the Hebrews without rights in the Holy Land, sinners are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

Like Ruth’s distress and poverty, the sinner has been ruined by the ravages of sin.

Like Ruth needed a redeemer to save her from crushing poverty, the sinner needs to be saved from his alienation and bankruptcy toward God.

In this beautiful story, Ruth follows the advice of Naomi, her spiritual guide. Naomi instructed Ruth to go to the threshing floor where Boaz, the near kinsman would be resting at night to guard the harvest. Naomi told her to humble herself, to lay down at his feet, and spend the night there, and when he wakes, to petition him to redeem her and the property the family lost during the famine (3:1).

We are told that Ruth obeyed, came quietly, and laid herself at the feet of Boaz, an honorable Eastern custom formalizing a legal request to be redeemed. All sinners who need grace prostrate themselves at the feet of Jesus.

Just as Boaz was eager to redeem Ruth, Christ is willing to redeem sinners.

But, there was a legal obstacle that hindered the purchase. There was a *nearer kinsman* than Boaz that had priority rights to the property . . . and Ruth.

Like this *nearer kinsman* had a claim upon Ruth and the fields that formerly belonged to her family, the Law has a claim upon the sinner: “The soul that sinneth shall die!” (Ezekiel 18:3).

Like this *nearer kinsman* could not redeem Ruth and the fields that formerly belonged to Naomi, the law has no power to redeem what the sinner lost in paradise. The law can tell a man what is right, but it cannot empower a man to keep its requirements. It can tell a man what is right. It can condemn the sinner, but it cannot save the sinner. It is holy and good, but it is not a redeemer.

(Note: there is a big difference between being saved by law, and being saved in order to obey the law. Christians obey the law because it is right while knowing their obedience to law cannot save them from sin. Jesus is the Savior from man’s sin; the law is God’s rule book for holy living. Believers obey the law, not to be redeemed, because they are redeemed. They know their standing before God rests in the obedience of Christ and His conformity to the law; that they are saved by His works, not their own works.)

And, here is where the story could not shadow our Savior. In the account, the “nearer kinsman” simply declined to redeem Ruth. Boaz then purchased the property with silver and took Ruth to be his bride.

In the actual account of redemption, our Near Kinsman went to the cross to pay the debt the law demanded—death for sin! He paid the price for our redemption in blood—the spiritual currency of the spirit world (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Like Boaz was willing to redeem Ruth and her precious all, our Kinsman Redeemer was willing to redeem us with His precious all!

He now bears in his hands and feet the wounds of the price paid . . . the evidence of His love for you and me.

Let us never forget the premium our Kinsman Redeemer brought to the auction to purchase our soul that we might have an inheritance in the kingdom of God!

77. THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST

Part I

The Need for Patience

The author of Hebrews said of the early Christians, “**ye have need of patience**, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise,” (Hebrews 10:36).

And so, for us!

We think we need money, rest, and comfort, but the Apostle said we have a need — a need for patience.

Patience is greatly needed in our fast food society. Even “instant coffee” takes too long. Surrounded by Wi-Fi, smartphones, hi-speed internet connections, and the world’s libraries at our fingertips, we are still driven by urgency.

How great the haste and hurry of modern life! We have tasted the fruit from the Poisonous Tree and our souls have been contaminated with ambition and anxiety.

Luke 10:41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

Mark 4:19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Many are unfamiliar with a quiet walk in the park and taking joy in the natural sounds of rustling leaves on the green carpet of a grassy knoll. Pouting over politics is more common than praise for the plain simple pleasures of life.

Business instead of rest, complaining instead of contentment, worry instead of trust, self-seeking instead of God-seeking, anxious ambition instead of restful reflection, pride instead of humility, outbursts of anger instead of bit & bridle self-control, contention instead of reconciliation hang like beggar’s rags on those who call themselves by the name of Christ.

Patience is not quietly waiting for a Happy Meal, but the restraint of passions under the discomfort of some pressure.

The context in this passage is one where Christians were being persecuted and having their homes seized.

A happy patient man is better than an ambitious proud man: “. . . the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit,” (Ecclesiastes 7:8).

Patience is a mark of a true Christian: “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience,” (Luke 8:15).

Patience is a requisite for service to Christ: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive (hand to hand combat); but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, **patient**” (2 Timothy 2:24).

*“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, **patience**, meekness,” (1 Timothy 6:11).*

*“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with **patience** the race that is set before us,” (Hebrews 12:1).*

Patience is essential when tested by abusive police-state, political power: “In your **patience** possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19).

Patience is a great virtue in our idealistic, utopian, ultra-positive pom pom world where we hear cheerleader clichés like, “You can do it,” or “Yes, we can,” or “You can do anything you put your mind to do.”

The truth is that most of us can’t change the world. We can’t change our circumstances, jobs, spouses, or bosses. When we have to live in the real world and accept the wrongs we cannot change, patience is at a premium.

Patience is not part of fallen nature . . . it is a heavenly, spiritual gift . . . a fruit of the Spirit, and the conscientious Christian will seek to harvest this grace (Galatians 5:22-23).

But, to possess this goodness, we need to define patience correctly.

The Definition of Patience

There are two Greek words translated patience in the English New Testament.

The first is *hupomeno* which means to “stay under” or “remain under.” It means to persevere without giving into fleshly passions like anger, sensuality, or complaining. It is the spiritual

ability to control the soul while passions are churning like pistons within the engine room of our vessel; to be obedient under a difficulty that isn't likely to change anytime soon; to run the race with pain screaming at us to stop and quit.

The second Greek word translated as *patience* is *macrothumio* – a compound of the Greek word *macro* (“long”) and *thumio* (“anger”). The idea here is looooooong suffering. It is the ability to *shut up* before you *blow up*. The human heart is like nitroglycerin ready to explode at the slightest irritation, but patience arms anger with a long fuse.

Patience is not merely waiting. It is the exercise of self-control when we feel something irritating or discomforting. It is a God-given power to endure discomfort without complaining or expressing irritability. It is not a passive trait. Rather, it is the positive ability to act responsibly without giving into our fears . . . to stay with something draining until it is finished . . . accepting what we cannot change without giving into bitterness or self-pity.

One characteristic of patience is that it has an **adhesive quality** about it. It **binds with other spiritual virtues** to yield godliness (2 Peter 1:4-7).

You can't score a home run in Christianity until you get self-control and patience past first base.

“To them who by *patient continuance in well doing . . .*” (Romans 2:7); and, “Here is the *patience* of the saints: here are they that *keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,*” (Revelation 13:10). In these two texts, patience unites with “well doing,” and *obedience* and *devotion to the faith* even while our ship is being driven by contrary winds.

*“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the **patience** and the faith of the saints” (Revelation 13:10).*

Yielding to the will of God and doing the will of God while yielding, calmness in suffering and suffering in calmness, waiting in faith and faith in waiting, quietness of soul and the soul in quietness, contentment with joy and joy in contentment, meekness with composure and composure with meekness, and more is contained in the one word, PATIENCE!

Patience Encouraged

Paul exhorts us to be patient even binding it to the virtue of love: “May the Lord direct your hearts *to the love of God* and to the *patience of Christ*” (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

So, let's consider the patience of Jesus Christ.

Part II

The Patience of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Today, we want to take a look at the patience of Christ.

He is the most patient man that ever lived.

We can understand the flood and the day His wrath when the Lord unleashed the storehouses of heaven upon wicked prediluvian man. We can appreciate the dark clouds and thundering storm of judgment upon rebels on the coming day of wrath. . . but the patience of Christ to restrain His holy ambitions and omnipotence toward hostile sinners and proud atheists, who can understand?

Oh, how His patience shines out in dealing with men . . . slow men . . . weak men . . . especially flawed men.

What patience He had with His people and how He bore with them in love upon eagles' wings.

The apostle John announced “. . . who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and **patience of Jesus Christ**, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9).

The patience of Jesus was exercised toward his undiscerning parents: “He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them” (Luke 2:52).

He endured with much patience forty days in the wilderness, when He hungered and was with the wild beasts (Mark 1:13).

He seems unruffled, undisturbed, unflappable, unflurried and unflustered by the intervention of his mother at the wedding of Cana (John 2), the hostile inquiry of the temple rulers after he cleansed His Father's House (John 2), the late night inquiry by Nicodemus (John 3), the slowness of the Samaritan woman to understand the basics of the Hebrew faith (John 4), the contentious debate with the Pharisees who owned the Devil as their father and who sought to stone him (John 8). Oh, His patience with those wretched religious leaders that heaped abuse upon the man born blind after His marvelous and miraculous healing (John 9)!

When His peace was interrupted, He expressed great patience and kindness to the woman who had a twelve-year menstrual problem with an issue of blood: “And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Luke 8:43–48).

He patiently endured Judas, the fingersmith, who rebuked Mary for washing the Lord's feet with her expensive bridal perfume (John 12).

Who can grasp His patience with His twelve imperfect disciples who seemed to be slow learners incapable of discerning when he was being literal or figurative (Matthew 15, 16; John 6)?

He never complained about them.

He did not call them names like “idiots” or “dummies.” If they needed correction, he did it simply, directly, and kindly (Luke 24:25).

He did not dismiss them because of their flaws, faults, or failures. He loved them unto the end, even washing their feet as a common servant. His love only increased as their weaknesses became more apparent (John 13-16).

He didn't smash the temple guard who arrogantly struck him for his address to the High Priest, but patiently and directly addressed his abuse (John 18:22).

And the greatest example of His patience in suffering is that He endured the cruelty of the cross.

“When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).

“Do you not think that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels” to crush the bones of these lying accusers? (Matthew 26:53).

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

All the buffetings, shame, dishonors, griefs, pains and sorrows He patiently endured. Oh! the patience of Christ, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame! (See Isaiah 53; Hebrews 12:1-3).

Jesus showed his patience to Thomas. When the disciples reported to him that they had seen Jesus, Thomas responded, “Unless I can put my finger into that nail-pierced hand, I will not believe.” Though Thomas had lived with Jesus for three years and heard his predictions about his death and resurrection, he could not accept the majority report. Jesus had to personally appear to Thomas, so he could examine his wounds and see his resurrected body. Jesus was so patient with the man — eight days patient — in providing the evidence he demanded.

Three times Jesus had to drill into Peter his commission, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” And he said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you” Jesus instructed him “. . . Feed my sheep . . . feed my sheep . . . feed my lambs” (John 20).

Our Lord is still the patient Christ.

Rejected by the world He has taken His place at the right hand of the Father’s throne. There He waits until His enemies are made His footstool . . . there he waits . . . waits for the Father to fulfill his promise, “Ask of Me and I will give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for Thy possession” (Psalm 2:8).

The One who “waited in the days of Noah” (1 Peter 3:20), revealed himself to Moses as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6) still endures “*with much patience* vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory” (Romans 9:22–23).

Jesus exercised perfect patience toward Paul the persecutor of Christians in order to win his soul and to make him the greatest evangelist of the first century.

Paul comments on the perfect patience of Christ saying, “Formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. . . . But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display *his perfect patience* as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:13, 16).

And, most importantly, he is perfectly patient with you and me with all our faults, foibles, fractures, flaws, and failures of faith.

This ought to encourage us. He didn’t strike us dead when we rebelled against him:

*“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, **but is patient toward you**, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. . . . **Count the patience of our Lord as salvation**, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him” (2 Peter 3:9, 15).*

Patience Is True Power

The patient man has power . . . God’s power to control the mighty engines churning within . . . power because he is not controlled by the capricious criticisms of carnal men . . . power because he restrains natural passions in order to express the love of God to undeserving people.

“*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city*” (Proverbs 16:32).

Finding Jesus to be even more patient when we are weak . . . even irritable . . . enables us to own up to our failures, to be humble, and to express goodness and kindness towards those who irritate us.

*“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” (James 5:7).*

*“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for **an example** of suffering affliction, and **of patience**” (James 5:10).*

John could say, “I am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9). Paul and the apostles belonged to it. The martyrs belong to it. Afflictions, persecutions and sufferings were their part. They are ours. Let us enroll in the patience of Christ. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).

May the Lord grant us His patience . . . and membership in that fellowship called, “the patience of Jesus Christ.”

78. THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

Romans 3:22: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (dia. pi,stewj Vlhsou/ Cristou/) unto all and upon all them that believe (tou.j pisteu,ontaj): for there is no difference."

Years ago, I gave my testimony at a revival. In my testimony, I mentioned that after I received Christ through prayer, my life changed. Later, a Bible teacher came to the pulpit to deliver his message. The first thing out of his mouth was, "Beloved, we are not saved by prayer, we are saved by faith." I was embarrassed, but I never forgot the lesson. The whole experience caused me to a more thoughtful Bible student.

We are not saved by prayer, but by the life and death of Christ. If prayer could save the soul, there would have been no need for God to send his Son to die for our sins.

I would like to take this a step further, "Would a man be saved by faith, if there was no cross?"

Let's put it another way, "If a man had faith, but did not know about the life and death of Christ, would he be saved?"

"Is a man justified by faith or is man justified by works?" In other words, "**Is a man's faith the basis of God's saving action, or is the basis of God's saving action the faithfulness of Christ?**"

It is the contention of this student that the basis of salvation is not faith, **but Christ's faithfulness**; that fundamentally, works, not faith, is the basis of salvation.

Now, before you denounce me as a heretic, read the rest of this paper.

What is the "faith of Christ?"

When I first began to wrestle with the subject of justification by faith, I had to battle my way through Romans 3:22: "Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ (dia. pi,stewj Vlhsou/ Cristou/) unto all and upon all them that believe (tou.j pisteu,ontaj): for there is no difference." What does the phrase "faith of Jesus Christ" mean?

Prior to this verse, Paul, acting as a prosecutor, pronounced all men guilty of breaking God's law (3:10-20). But, in verse 21, Paul crossed the aisle and put on the hat of a defense attorney in order to argue the case for the justification of the believer.

Paul's Argument

Paul's forensic argument is as follows: To be justified in God's Court, a man must possess righteousness (Romans 2:1-13).

First, the bad news: all men are guilty of breaking God's law (3:10ff).

Second, the good news: There is a righteousness that comes from God that enables men to possess what the Court requires. But, what is this righteousness, and where does it come from?

Semantically, the phrase, "faith of Jesus Christ," is usually interpreted as "faith in Jesus." But, if this is so, why did Paul say "unto all that believe?" Why two "faiths?" Could it be that the phrase "faith in Jesus" is a poor translation and should be translated "faithfulness of Jesus" instead of the "faith of Jesus?"

Theologically, it is the contention of this student that Paul is saying that sinners are declared "guilty" in His Court; that in order to stand before a holy God, a man needs real righteousness—substantive righteousness, not synthetic righteousness; that in the gospel, substantive righteousness is available to the believer, even the righteousness of Christ; that faith is not a virtue required by God, nor is faith a substitute for real righteousness; that faith is the confidence that Christ lived a righteous life on behalf of His elect and that God gives the believer Christ's righteousness when he trusts Him.

Linguistically, I believe the phrase "faith of Christ" should be translated "faithfulness of Christ." Consider the following evidence:

The phrase "faith of Christ" (dia. pi, stewj Vhsou/ Cristou/) is a subjective genitive (Grk: indicating origin or source), not an objective genitive. The term "faith" (pi, stewj) is a feminine noun, an ablative of agency. While it can be translated "faith," it can also be translated "faithfulness." Since "Jesus Christ" (Vhsou/ Cristou) is in the genitive, this "faith" or "faithfulness" must be coming from Christ. Obviously, Paul is not talking about Christ's faith, but his acts of "faithfulness." Paul is not calling for an exercise of faith from the believer at this point in his argument as much as he is informing us that the "righteousness from God" that is available is none other than the "faithfulness of Christ."

Romans 1:17 says, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." The phrase "faith to faith" (evk pi, stewj eivj pi, sti) contains two prepositions and is difficult to translate. The first (evk pi, stewj) appears to be an ablative of source, or that which is produced by a person. Is "faith" produced by us or by Christ?

The second prepositional phrase (eivj pi,sti) is either an accusative of purpose or accusative of result.

This phrase could be saying that “our faith produces faithfulness,” or it could be saying that Christ’s faithfulness is the foundation of our faith, or God’s righteousness comes from Christ’s faithfulness to produce man’s faith.

Romans 3:3 says, “For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” The phrase “faith of God” (th.n pi,stin tou/ qeou) indicates that the “faith” comes from God. “From God” is genitive indicating the source. Obviously, this does not refer to “faith” being produced by God but the “faithfulness of God.” That is, man’s unbelief does not nullify God’s faithfulness.

Paul uses the term “evk pi,stewj Vlhsou/” in Romans 3:26: “To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which *believeth in Jesus* (evk pi,stewj Vlhsou, faith of Jesus).” Again, is Paul calling for man to exercise faith or is he referring to the faithfulness of Christ? This could be saying that God justifies the one who stands on the fidelity of Christ.

Romans 4:16 discusses the “faith of Abraham” (tw/| evk pi,stewj VAbraa,m). Does this refer to Abraham’s response of faith to God or does it refer to faithfulness resulting from his faith? Here it appears to refer to Abraham’s response of faith and not his faithfulness. Because Abraham trusted God’s faithfulness, God was faithful to justify him.

The phrase “evk pi,stewj Cristou/” is used twice in Galatians 2:16: “know that a man is not justified by (his) observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (evk pi,stewj Cristou/”). So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ (evk pi,stewj Cristou/, faith of Christ) and not by (our) observing the law, because by (our) observing the law no one will be justified.”

It appears best to render “evk pi,stewj Cristou/” here as the “faithfulness of Christ.” Paul taught we are not saved by our personal observance of the law. We are saved because of Christ’s personal observance of the law. We live because Christ was careful to do all that God requires to be justified in His sight.

Galatians 2:20 also uses the phrase “faith of Christ” (evk pi,stewj Cristou/).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith of the Son of God* (evn pi,stei zw/ th/| tou/ ui`ou/ tou/ qe), who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

The title “Son of God” is in the genitive indicating that “the faith” comes from Christ (a subjective genitive, not an objective genitive). Paul is not saying that “I” continue to live my Christian life exercising the faith. He is not saying that “I live” by faith objectively, but “I live” because Christ was faithful subjectively, i.e., all believers have a right standing before God because the Lord obeyed the law perfectly on their behalf.

Philippians 3:9 says, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through *the faith of Christ* (dia. pi, stewj Cristou) the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Is Paul saying, “I want to stand before God being one who is justified by faith?” or, is Paul saying, “I want to stand before God, not having my own righteousness, but having the faithfulness of Christ which comes by faith?” It appears to me this ablative of agency refers to the faithfulness of Christ.

The legal argument: The word “justification” is a forensic term having to do with the courts. In God’s Court, only a man who keeps the law can be justified (Romans 2:13). Christ was “born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). He obeyed the law (Philippians 2:9-12), and He was the end of the law (Romans 10:4). Consequently, He was “justified” (declared righteous) by the Spirit when He was raised from the dead (1 Timothy 3:15, 16).

Even in God’s court, faith is not a substitute for righteousness. A man must possess real, substantial righteousness if he is to stand before an all-holy God. The good news of the gospel is that the righteousness of Christ is given to the one who believes.

An argument from substitution. When we say, “Christ died for our sins,” we are saying He became our substitute. If Christ took my sins, then I must take His righteousness. If sin was imputed to him, then his “faithfulness” is imputed to me. In other words, we are saved by works—HIS WORKS!

We are saved, not only by his death, but also by His obedience.

In Summary, while it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between “faith” and “faithfulness,” it is at times important to do so. It would be incorrect to always interpret *pistis* (faith) as objective—something being demanded of man. Sometimes, it is subjective and can refer to that which is produced by an agent—in this case something produced by Christ, i.e., His faithfulness.

79. THE TROUBLED CHRIST

Oh, the beauty and symmetry of the troubled Christ!

Sometimes the Spirit of God pulls back the veil and permits us to catch a glimpse into library of the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14).

Palm Sunday, a few days before our Lord was nailed to the cross, is one of them (John 12).

John does not describe the agony of Christ as a man in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is absent in his gospel.

Rather, John gives us a quick peek into the soul of the Son . . . and, it was troubled . . . for the Greeks, for the disciples, for the honor of His Father's name and whether or not men would be able to comprehend how His agony was the Supreme Necessity of History to secure the redemption of men.

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” (John 12:27)

The request of the Greeks to see Christ stirred the soul of Jesus creating within Him conflicting emotions.

The Greeks approached Philip, “We wish to see Jesus.” Philip and Andrew relayed their request to the Lord, and Jesus turned the topic to His glorification and compares himself to a seed of wheat that must die in order to bear fruit (12:24).

His answer took a morbid turn into the necessities of His followers hating this life in order to obtain eternal life (12:25).

Little did those in the circle of conversation know that He would soon be indicted, tried in a kangaroo court, and impaled on a cross.

How could the Greeks . . . or the disciples understand the necessity of Calvary? The disciples seemed totally in the dark, and the Greeks were totally blind to it.

How could they grasp justice by wood and iron, by blood and gore, “glory by humiliation, life through death, the secured happiness of mankind through His own anguish and abandonment.” But, Jesus understood it well and the coming event disturbed Him.

“My soul is troubled (tarasso),” whispered Jesus.

This is the same intense perplexity that thundered within Zechariah when he saw the angel in the temple (Luke 1:12); and, the same feelings that erupted within the disciples when they were in the boat in the middle of the storm, and the same cracking emotions the disciples experience when they saw Jesus walking on the waves (Matthew 14:26); and the same drumfire of feelings that moved the two disciples on their way to Emmaus when they realized they were talking to the risen Christ (Luke 24:38).

Jesus was fully God and full man. As a man, His soul was disturbed by the unsuspecting Greeks, disrupted by His undiscerning disciples, and distressed by the horrifying hours to come.

Most men would beg for their life, but Jesus did not pray, “Father, save me from the cross!”

He had an appointment with death . . . a cruel and painful death. He was a man born to die. He had to die once that we might not have to die twice.

His response stuns the best of thoughtful men: “So masterly is His self-command, so steadfast and constant His habitual temper, **that one almost inevitably underrates the severity of the conflict.**”

Who can fail to admire the Lord’s majesty and dignity while exposing his perceptivity and vulnerability.

Rather than plead for deliverance, He prays, “Father, glorify thy name!” Unlike most men who would be overwhelmed with fear and self-concern, He was driven by some delicate, ethereal, unearthly force – the glory of His Heavenly Father.

He taught His disciples to pray, “Hallowed be thy name,” and now he looks up and prays, “Glorify thy name” We learn here that the honor of God’s name was the foremost concern of our Lord . . . and, may it be our highest priority!

The lightning answer shocked the crowd as the heavens boomed and rumbled like a thunderclap in an electrical storm.

“There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The multitude therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it had thundered: others said, An angel hath spoken to Him.”

Jesus answered and said, This voice hath not come for My sake, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be

lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself. But this He said, signifying by what manner of death He should die . . .” (John 12:28-37).

Here is proof of Jesus’ unique relationship to His Father: “I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” (John 11:42).

Some thought the voice was a crack of thunder; others seemed to discern in heaven’s discharge the voice of an angel speaking from heaven.

But Jesus explained that the roar from above was not “to Him” or for His benefit, but rather for the edification of those who stood by Him — a miracle to the Greeks and a stunning reminder to the disciples that the One they followed was God’s indomitable lightning strike in history.

The meaning of this thunderclap of assurance was to broadcast to the disciples that God had been glorified through the Son’s historical visitation on earth, and that in the coming days of confusion and perplexity, no matter how painful and perplexing, and no matter how filled with a cannonade of human emotions, the Father would still be glorified.

And it was indeed of supreme importance that the disciples understand that *the events which were about to happen over the next week of our Lord’s sojourn with them were under the command of the Father that He might be glorified in Christ.*

It should **be easy** for Christians to understand how the cross and the sufferings of the Son glorifies the Father’s name, **but how difficult** it is for *onlookers to perceive how the sudden shift of the Messianic mission of healing and power to the shame and helplessness of a criminal’s cross was not the complete defeat of God’s purpose . . . but, the fulfillment of the protoevangelium in the history of redemption (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 9:1-6).*

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die,” (John 12:31-33).

The cross announces a preemptive strike on the kingdom of darkness — the initial, judicial defeat of Satan wherein he would be dispossessed of power (“cast out”, *ekballo*), chained and refrained from totally deceiving the nations during the Christian era (Revelation 20:3).

The apostle shows us the overflowing love of the Son of God and *His resolution to deliver men from a ghastly, shameful death* by vicariously tasting *the bitterness of the cup of God’s judgment in their place . . . on their behalf . . . as their substitute . . . for their sin . . . by being lifted up on*

the cross in order that believers might never taste a single drop of God's wrath reserved for their sin and rebellion against Him.

Rather, our Lord informs us that it is through the crucified Christ that men are qualified to enter the kingdom of God to enjoy the sunshine of His presence.

*"He leads them, therefore, to consider that in His judgment the whole world is judged, and to perceive in His arrest and trial and condemnation not merely the misguided and wanton outrage of a few men in power, **but the critical hour of the world's history.**" (Quotes from *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*).*

It was not on a throne that Jesus conquered man's enemies, but through His execution on a Roman scaffold that He defeated Satan, sin, and death.

*"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,"
(John 15:13)*

Oh, the beauty and symmetry of the troubled Christ!

80. THE COURAGE OF CHRIST

Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.

Due to the rise of pajama boys in our society, courage seems to be short supply.

Finding courage among men today is like searching for beef on a worm.

Feminist in pursuit of power beat young men into submission with delusory doctrines such as *toxic masculinity*.

Movie producers promote clean shaven girly boys as stars on silly sitcoms forging young boys with hammer and heat into cross-dressers, soft ladyboys, and queers.

Courage has its origin from the French word *corage*, *cor* being the root word for *heart*. *Courage* is a manly *virtue* which is derived from the Latin term *vir* meaning *manly*.

Thus, courage is associated with handsome manliness — not with man things like hunting, fishing, or football, but manly things like defending one's family in a bone-crushing battle to the death against a Viking eager to molest his family and plunder his assets.

Mark Twain noted that *physical courage*, like climbing a mountain, *seems to be quite common, but moral courage quite rare*.

He went on to say that *courage is not the absence of fear, but the resistance to and conquest of fear*.

For inspiration, *let's take a look at the moral courage of Christ*.

Our Lord had no fear about coming into this world.

Unlike us, the Lord had a choice as to when, where, and how he was going to be born.

He accepted His Father's commission to leave the comforts of heaven to share in the common difficulties of man, the struggles and limitations of humanity, and the conflicts inflicted upon men because of their fall from grace in the Garden of Eden.

He was squeezed through the birth canal and born with all the body parts of a man, wrapped in swaddling clothes, put in a feeding trough in a cave-barn, and circumcised on the eight day.

He was commissioned to the care of a poor, blue-collar family without the luxury of wealth, education, or political power. Being rich is easy, but it takes courage to live responsibly as a poor man.

Within days of his birth, Herod issued an order to have the Christ child assassinated — death by sword. Escaping to Egypt, his family lived as refugees in a foreign country.

At age twelve he discoursed with scribes and lawyers about the meaning of the Torah for Hebrews.

Our Lord was fearless under stress.

Before he entered the ministry, the Spirit drove him into the dry, dusty desert of the Judean hills to undergo 40 days of fasting, extreme weight loss, and temptation by the prince of demons. Mark adds a detail that he was with “wild beasts.” We can only conjecture Mark was referring to centipedes, scorpions, rattlesnakes, and vultures (Luke 4).

When weak and hungry, Satan offered him bread to satisfy his roaring hunger. Most of us, having the will power of a toddler, get grumpy if we can’t get cream and sugar with our coffee every morning. But, our Lord, with his will embedded in the granite of God’s purpose, courageously rejected Satan’s pleasing presentation. He used his power to provide the luxury of wine at a wedding feast in Cana, but would not use his power to satisfy his own pressing physical needs in the desert (John 2).

It takes no courage to jump on the band wagon of a populist movement or to fake being a just man in public, but Jesus resisted the Devil alone . . . in private . . . face to face.

Our Lord had no fear of ministry.

Faithful Christian ministry has its own hazards as *Foxes Book of Martyrs* indexes.

In his first contest at Jerusalem, he faced government corruption in the temple wherein covetous rulers turned his Father’s House into an emporium for commercial gain. Bartering, haggling like street hawkers, inflated prices, banking fees, and the stress of purchasing lambs required for worship rubbed our Lord’s soul raw to the bone. Moral courage!

With the guts of a gladiator, he made a whip, turned over the banker’s tables, and drove the banking bandits out of the temple taking on temple corruption that had wormed its way into the

nation's institutions robbing the nation of integrity. On that day, he made himself the enemy of the temple rulers. Like the CIA, they sanctioned him, plotting how to assassinate Christ without raising public suspicions (John 2).

He chose Galilee to be his place of ministry, the same political province where John the Baptist was arrested and executed by Herod (Luke 4:14).

We are told the number one fear of people is public speaking. We fear saying the wrong thing, forgetting our lines, stuttering, or coming across in a way that angers the crowd. We want people to admire what we have to say. But, not Christ! None of these infirmities afflicted him.

In his first sermon, he spoke to his home town crowd who were smug, envious, and curious about what he was going to say. The synagogue ruler, handed him a scroll of the Scriptures, and Jesus read from Isaiah, and added a few comments. When finished, the whole congregations seized him and sought to push him over a near-by cliff (Luke 4:31ff).

Most men would have softened the message or watered it down so as not to excite a riot, but our Lord spoke the truth accurately, simply, and directly without provocative emotion or ill-will.

Our Lord had no fear of the messy problems associated with fallen humanity.

Most of us avoid people with obvious problems like street beggars, the homeless, and crazy cops on a mission. But our Lord ministered to a man that was possessed with a thousand demons, the Gadarene crowd that begged him to leave their province after a dynamic exorcism, Nicodemus who sought him out under the cover of darkness, the rich young ruler, an immoral Samaritan woman that had been divorced by five men, a ruler from Capernaum distressed over his dying son, a sick woman afflicted with twelve years of bleeding, Pharisees trapped in the cult of Judaism who thought they were God's chosen people (John 8), a Roman centurion with a sick servant, ten men afflicted with the terrifying disease of leprosy, prostitutes who needed forgiveness, and entering a Jewish tombs to defeat the grave (John 11).

He even interrupted a funeral to raise a son from the dead (Luke 7:12).

There was no person too low or too high, or a problem too big or too small that our Lord was not willing to face.

Our Lord had no fear of antagonistic men.

Most of us tremble like rabbits when we are forced to speak to people outside our social status or business structure.

During our Lord's ministry he comfortably addressed all kinds of men. Neither lawyers, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, rich men, poor men, prostitutes, hypocrites, kings, governors, city dwellers, country folk, innocent children, distressed widows, proud officials, tax collectors or self-righteous Jews intimidated him.

Most of us avoid doing anything to irritate a cop or judge. When chided by the scribes for violating sacred traditions of rabbis, our Lord brought a scathing legal indictment against the lawyers and their corrupted legal interpretations of God's law (Matthew 15). When these depraved lawyers plotted a trap for him by planting a crippled man in the synagogue for the purpose of indicting him on criminal charges for violating the Sabbath, our Lord gladly released his power to make the man whole despite the malice intended by the team of prosecutors (Mark 3:5).

Our Lord did not fear malicious witnesses, men of power, or the corrupt court of a hastily organized midnight trial.

Falsely charged of not paying taxes to Caesar, of treason to Rome, and leading a rebellion, he remained silent . . . or answered questions directly and simply (Luke 22).

While frantic officials dispatched runners to wake members of the Sanhedrin and to produce corrupt witnesses who would perjure the record in favor of the state, the Savior seemed to be the only man at the bar in control of his faculties.

Our Lord dreaded the cross, but did not abandon his assignment.

In the garden, he sweat great drops of blood, a condition known as *hematidrosis*, the rupture of small blood vessels due to stress.

He not only faced death, but the cruelest death of all — jagged Roman spikes splitting the metacarpal bones in his wrist, the jolting pain of steel driven through his feet, the nauseating struggle to grasp for air, the certainty of asphyxiation, and the hopelessness of deliverance from death.

Oh, the muscular courage of Christ!

May more men rub shoulders with Him!

81. THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Modern intelligence won't accept anything on authority. But it will accept anything without authority.” — G.K. Chesterton, The Man Who Knew Too Much

My goal is to make your heart race and your cheeks flush . . . that you might be utterly astonished like the people in the first century who pupils were dilated and skin tingled at the authority of Christ (Mark 122);

that steel might be fused into your soul to take on Rambo challenges to win souls and summon rebels to surrender to the authority of Christ.

The word “authority” comes from the French word “author” (*autorite*’) as in God is the Author of creation. *Autorite*’ refers to: authority, prestige, right, permission, dignity, gravity; and the Holy Scriptures. It is closely associated with the term “kingdom” which refers to “the right to rule.” The kingdom is not a place, but a dominion, a jurisdiction, and a rule of law.

When Jesus preached the kingdom of God, he announced the presence of Heaven’s authority among men to defeat man’s enemies: Satan, sin, and death. When the Lord taught his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” He was teaching them to recognize heaven’s authority and to surrender to it NOW!

Authority is a strong, powerful fist-like word. It refers to a warrant to rule, a legal right to make decisions and to execute the duties of a commission. It involves a grant of authority and enforcement power to perform assigned tasks associated with an office. The term battle-tested, “military muscle” comes to mind.

Some men love authority, others are intimidated by it.

That absolute power corrupts absolutely is an over statement. While some covet power for self-serving ends, good men use it for the benefit of those they serve.

It doesn’t take a thousand men to move a rock. It only takes one with authority to command a few men to do so. Possession of authority is essential for a man to move an organization up a mountain towards its lofty goals.

To find gold, you must first have authority to dig.

The gospel that turned the world upside down in the first century preached *another authority superior to Caesar, King Jesus* whose authority is deeply rooted in His resurrection from the dead ([Acts 17:1-7](#)).

When challenged by hostile civil magistrates over the authority by which the fishermen apostles conducted their open air preaching Peter answered, “by the name of Jesus Christ . . .” ([Acts 4:10](#)).

If we are to tap into the power exercised by first century Christians, we must first hand-cuff ourselves to the authority of Christ and stand under it (under stand).

(1) During His ministry He claimed authority.

To forgive sins ([Matthew 9:6](#)). His message of spiritually healing was so important, he left a village of sick people to go to another town to offer forgiveness to a paralytic ([Mark 1:37-38](#); [Mark 2:5](#)).

To execute authority over all men ([John 5:27](#)).

To lawfully adopt men as the de jure children of God ([John 1:12-13](#))

To cast out demons and the powers of darkness ([Mark 1:27](#)).

Moreover,

He gave authority to his disciples over all kinds of diseases ([Luke 9:1](#)).

He taught the people as one having authority and not as the bland, pale Pharisees who acted like undertakers of the nation’s dead ([Matthew 7:29](#)).

People perceived that His power came from His authority ([Matthew 9:8](#)); others were completely amazed by it ([Mark 1:22](#)). The rulers of Israel were also flushed about by the courage of Christ. They demanded to know the source of His authority and why He spoke with such thunder and power ([Matthew 21:23](#)).

Yes, King Jesus had dynamite power; but, more importantly He had heaven’s authority!

He even informed Governor Pilate that he didn’t have as much power as he thought he did, and what little power he possessed, was given to Him from above ([John 19:11](#)).

(2) Christ claimed power and authority over His own life and destiny.

John 10:18 “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority (exousia) to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

(3) On the eve of His death, at the most inopportune time, He claimed to have authority over all men.

John 17:2 As thou hast given him (the Son) power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

(4) Before His ascension, He taught His disciples that all authority in heaven and earth had been given unto Him; that they were to go into all the world to challenge souls to surrender to His kingdom authority.

Matthew 18:18 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

Think of the deltoid muscle in this statement and how it must have emboldened the disciples to defy mutinous state bullies, to conduct open air ministries, and to travel throughout the multi-cultural Roman Empire preaching the gospel.

(5) Paul taught that Christ has authority over the original creation . . . and the new creation: that He is the Head of the physical creation, and Head of the new creation, the church (Colossians 1:15-18).

(6) Paul called Christ the King of kings, and Lord of lords; John called Him the “Prince of the Rulers” of the nations ; and, Jeremiah called him the King of the Nations:

*1 Timothy 6:15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and **only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;***

*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,*

*Jeremiah 10:7 Who would not fear thee, **O King of nations?** for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.*

*Jeremiah 10:10 But the **LORD** is the true God, he is the living God, and **an everlasting king:** at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and **the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.***

Do you realize what is being said here?

These spirit-inspired men taught that Jesus Christ was not only Lord to individuals, but the supreme Ruler over governors, kings, and Caesars;

-that He is not only Head of the church, but Ruler of the kings of the earth;

-that as the church looks to Christ for wisdom and strength to conduct its ministry, also legislators, presidents, and judges **must conduct** their assigned duties under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ;

-that to study His law and pray for his guidance is the duty of all rulers in Japan, India, France, Sweden, England, Brazil, and America; that to reject His authority is rebellion by civil rulers and a forfeiture of Divine grace upon a nation;

-that not only the common man, but rulers and governors must be challenged to surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Acts 27:24 "Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou **must** be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."*

*Philippians 4:22 All the saints salute you, chiefly **they that are of Caesar's household.***

The issue, of course, is not whether the Lord Jesus is King of kings, but whether statesmen will acknowledge Him as such.

In God's economy, there is no such thing as separation of Biblical authority from government . . . a de sure secular state . . . or sovereign government. He is sovereign, and government officials are called to surrender to His dominions.

[Note: Christians would do well to consider the integrity, stateliness, nobility, reasonableness, and social graces Paul possessed that qualified him to speak before governors and kings.

There was nothing "red neck," "hillbilly," or "barnyard" about the apostle. Paul was anything but a yelling, screaming, bombastic, emotional, wild-eyed, fanatical Charismatic preacher we hear on the radio today. Clothed with dignity, he behaved like an ambassador for Christ.

Guard the means as well as the ends! Beware of pseudo-spirituality and bogus authority! Seek dignity under His authority! – Titus 2:1-2].

(7) The Spirit commands government officials, kings, governors, and rulers to acknowledge the Son and to kiss His signet ring, and warns them of the consequences of not doing so (Psalm 2:12).

The failure of Iran, Ukrainians, Israel, Jordan, or Egypt to kiss the Son is proof they have joined the rebellion mentioned in Psalm 2.

Where are the Christians operating under the authority of Christ to rebuke rulers for their rebellion against the King of kings?

The great command in Matthew 28 is not only an order to win souls . . . but “to teach nations” about the Savior Who is also the “King of the Nations.”

(8) Great men of faith perceive His authority and surrender to it.

*Luke 7:7-9 the Roman Centurion: “Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For **I also am a man set under authority**, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. ”When Jesus heard these things, **he marvelled at him**, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, **‘I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.’**”*

Two times Christ marveled: (1) at the faith of the centurion who perceived His authority; and (2) at the unbelief of his home town who could not perceive His authority ([Mark 6:6](#)).

(9) Christians error beyond calculation when they don’t understand (stand under) the authority and power of Christ . . . or minimize it . . . cheapen it . . . depreciate it . . . discount it . . . neglect it . . . ignore it . . . lesson it . . . dwarf it . . . prune it . . . underplay it . . . and fail to be moved by it.

Matthew 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

In Christ, you have more authority in your little finger than Satan has in his arsenal of dirty tricks. Though this spiritual adversary is the leader of the resistance against God, even he has to gain permission from Christ to reek havoc among men (Job 1).

Christians do a great disservice to the Lord when they limit Christ’s authority only to the church and fail to call civil rulers to obey Christ.

There used to be a day in America when civil rulers could not be seated in office until they attended an election day sermon to consider their how they must serve under the Lord Jesus Christ.

See Daniel Foster, A.M. Pastor of the Church in New Braintree, excerpts of his election day sermon, in the addendum, when he preached on the following text.

*Proverbs 8:16. By Me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth
(and some to dishonor –2 Timothy 2:20)*

PRACTICAL EFFECT OF FAITH IN THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

(1) You will feel the power of His authority and experience a new freedom in your life (Luke 4:32).

Believers destroy Satan's strongholds by advancing against his citadels of evil under the authority and power of Christ; that is, our peace and power begins and ends with the authority of our Lord.

(2) Your Bible study will come alive and people will be astonished at your insights (Mark 1:22)

"And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."

(3) You will no longer seek permission from the State to exercise your God-given rights or to conduct your ministry (3 John 1:7).

All legitimate branches of authority have roots in the soil of God's will (Romans 13:1). Thus, the first duty of a Christian is not to submit to authority, but to question authority; not to believe a claim, but to demand proof of claim; not to ask permission, but to assert your God-given rights on the land.

"That is what I have always understood to be the essence of anarchism: the conviction that the burden of proof has to be placed on authority, and that it should be dismantled if that burden cannot be met."

— Noam Chomsky

"I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations." — James Madison

“It is the first duty of every citizen to question authority” – Benjamin Franklin.

“Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth” – Albert Einstein.

(4) Operating under the authority of Christ without permission of the State may bring you face to face with the snarls and sneers of civil authorities.

Proverbs 29:2 “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”

Christ and all the apostles felt the ax of judgment by government officials because they acted as a NGO (non-government organization) ([Luke 12:11](#)).

Closet Christians engaged in private personal piety have no reason to fear. But, those that believe that the “Bible is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people” (Wycliffe) and that Christian faith in the only true religion will see the curved upper lip of the neo-pagans.

(5) You can resist rebel rulers with confidence. Christians are beholden to resist the State that seeks the total subjugation of the total man to total government; and, “Resistance to tyranny is service to God.” (Benjamin Franklin)

The word “police” comes from a French word meaning “policies.” Modern police officers do not enforce law, they use the sword to force government policies down the throats of defenseless citizens.

When statutes do more harm than crime, and state policy is a form of violence, citizens have a duty to resist.

“Nothing strengthens (de facto) authority so much as silence.” — Leonardo da Vinci

There is no such thing as righteous rebellion because rebellion can only be against de jure authority. Since God is the only Lawgiver, rebellion must be viewed as disobedience to His law. It is not possible for criminals to rebel against criminals because all criminals are outlaws ([James 4:12](#)).

(6) If you want to move an organization forward, obtain the authority to do it.

“No,” Frank said. “I’m only a centurion.” Jason cursed in Latin. “He means he can’t control a whole legion. He’s not of high enough rank.” Nico swung back his

black sword at another gryphon. “Well, then, promote him!”
— Rick Riordan, *The House of Hades*

The greater you assert the authority of Christ, the more you will assert your freedom from the State. Likewise, the greater your neglect of the authority of Christ the greater your dependence on civil authority. Further, the greater your claim on the authority of Christ, the greater the State will target you for abuse. The State is not concerned about your private religious beliefs, but it rattles like a skeleton if you assert your freedom in Christ publicly before State officials, police officers, and judges.

Private piety is necessary for integrity; but, private piety can also be the enemy of the public exercise of religion.

Christianity was never meant to be practiced in the closet, it was meant to be lived on Main Street. Claiming the authority of Christ is not only necessary for personal holiness, but good for the advancement of truth and morals among public officials— the lack of which is self-evident.

The future of mankind is in the nail-pierced hands of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Surrender to him and be saved; rebel against Him and be crushed by His sovereign power ([Revelation 5](#)).

82. HOW CHRIST DROVE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INSANE

Luke 6: 11 . . . And they were filled with madness; and communed (plotted) one with another what they might do to Jesus.

Right after Jesus healed the cripple man, the Pharisees were so filled with rage that Jesus would not obey their rules, they lost their minds.

The contrast between the beautiful Christ and the deceptive government officials is something to behold.

The Pharisees were the leading party of the State of Israel. These characters, much like our State officials, did **not** believe in the rule of law for themselves; rather, they believed in **ruling others through law**. They were the party that believed you could change the world by multiplying regulations to control mankind. Further, they enforced their rules on the citizenry while exempting themselves.

The word “madness” is the Greek word *anoia*. It means “without a mind,” “stupid,” and “mindless” We get the word “ignorant” from this word, but ignorance is not what is conveyed here. Rather, the idea here is one of rage or fury – a state of mind lacking reason and sensibility.

Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath drove the government officials crazy — crazy enough to plot how to assassinate Him! Likewise, the more you become like Christ and resist the State’s control of your person and your possessions, the more you will enrage government officials.

Let’s analyze how Jesus drove these government officials insane.

Luke:6 6-11 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And

they were filled with madness; and communed (plotted) one with another what they might do to Jesus.

The entire conflict between Christ and these officials was over whose laws should govern society – the laws of God or the statutes of men. Sound familiar?

Since gods are the source of law, you can discover the god of that society by discovering its source of law. In Jesus’s mind, the Source of law was the LORD God; in the mind of these officials, the source of law was the Counsel of the Sanhedrin. In the mind of Americans, the source of law is in WE THE PEOPLE. Democracy places the source of law in man. Can you say, idolatry?

Jesus was a man of Torah but he understood that law had limitations.

The Pharisees saw no limits to law and thought they could change the world by creating more rules to regulate society. They were not concerned with actual violations of God’s law; but, they became “unglued” when Jesus did not submit to their case law rulings.

Jesus loved liberty, but the government officials hated individual freedom.

They were a political party who thought they could change the world by multiplying laws and controlling men through regulations. They thought their codes applied to all men and were indignant when Jesus violated their rules against healing a man on the Sabbath.

When modern men think of freedom, they think of lawlessness — the freedom to do anything they want. But, this is not liberty. It is anarchy. Law is necessary for a civil society, but law has its limits. It cannot save or regenerate men, but properly exercised, it can purge evil from among men. Jesus believed in law — limited law (God’s law); the Pharisees believed in unlimited law — in an infinite number of man-made laws, rules, and regulations.

Jesus understood there was no liberty without responsibility. He also knew that every time the rulers created a law, the people lost a freedom.

Jesus had compassion on the invalid and used his power to set the man free from his pain and suffering.

The Jewish officials had no feelings for the man. Insentience dominated the ruling class. Having a willful disregard for the man’s suffering, these rulers were more interested in using the cripple to trap Jesus in a violation of their codes. Likewise, today, government officials are callous beings who could care less about the people. They see law as a means of controlling citizens in order to produce their utopian society.

Our Lord challenged their legal principle: “I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the **sabbath** days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy *it*?”

Like government officials today, they would not answer Jesus’ question. Because they were corrupt, they went *sub silentio*. Silence is a species of conduct. When government officials go mute, it is because they have been caught in an act of fraud.

Silence can only be equated with fraud where there is a legal or moral duty to speak or where an inquiry left unanswered would be intentionally misleading. (US v. Tweel, 550 F.2d 297, 299 (1977) quoting US v. Prudden, 424 F 2d 1021, 1032 (1970)).

Jesus expressed little concern about being in conformity with man-made statutes, but He had great concerns about being compliant with God’s law.

The government officials had little interest in being compliant with God’s law, but had great concerns about enforcing compliance with their statutes on the people. To them, Jesus was a threat to their power.

Jesus confronted the officials for setting up a “Sabbath trap.”

They forged a spiritual speed trap designed to cite him for a statutory infraction of their rules. They saw themselves as “good guys” because they obeyed the rules; and, they saw Jesus as a “bad guy” because He was so cavalier about their man-made rules and regs.

[Note: There is only one Lawgiver (James 4:12). Legislators can discover law, but they can’t make law; rather, they make codes and regulations to govern corporations.]

Jesus did good, healed the man, and set him free.

Since God’s law can be summarized under the principle, “Do no harm,” Jesus did not break God’s law by relieving the man of his suffering. There is no law against doing good! However, the government officials would rather see the man depressed and suffering than have one of their precious little statutes ignored . . . or, their power challenged.

Likewise, *if you do no harm*, you have committed no crime! If you are charged for violating some statute, fight back and refuse to be trapped in a commercial scheme to control you and extract money from you.

When Jesus did not comply with their Sabbath regulations, he stabbed a sword into the heart of Judaism. They went totally berserk – “popped a cork” and “blew a fuse.” And like law

enforcement agencies in present time, they saw Jesus as a threat to the system. He had to go! Accusation, indictment, trial, and execution clogged the arteries of these hardened hearts.

Just as government officials had little concern for God's law in Jesus' day, they have little concern for God's law in our time; just as the officials in Jesus' day placed great emphasis on man-made statutes, government officials are vigorously concerned about the enforcement of man-made statutes today. Like the Party of the Pharisees hated freedom and demanded compliance to their rules, so modern government officials are eager to penalized you for violating their *mala prohibita* statutes.

As the Pharisees perceived Jesus as a threat to Judaism, modern government workers see those who do not comply with their statutes and rules as a threat to their power. FEMA calls it a threat to national security.

There is all the difference in the world between the rule of law (the Ten Commandments) and ruling men through law (multiplication of statutes). Any government that seeks the total subjugation of the total man to total government **MUST BE RESISTED!**

May we know the difference!

And, as they crucified Jesus for non-compliance, State officials will punish you, dear Christian, if you do not submit to their totalitarian system which believes in the total subjugation of the total man to total government.

83. BEHOLD THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST IN JOHN 13

John 13:1 Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

A king washing the feet of peasants ought to arouse our curiosity.

Without wavering, without shame, without fanfare and pomp, knowing His time upon earth would meet a crushing end upon the cruel cross, He revealed His love in humble service to His men.

Knowing their weaknesses as imperfect men would soon to be revealed by malicious accusations of government official, He loved them unto the end, washed their feet, and prepared them to accept His death and departure from earth.

The Son, a King, a Prince robbed in the glories of Heaven's majesty divested Himself of all the splendor belonging to Almighty God to gird himself with a servant's towel to wash dirt off the feet of His disciples.

A King washing the feet of His citizens . . . a Prince cleansing paupers . . . the Son of God performing the duties of a common household servant -- who has ever heard of such a thing?

A teacher on his knees with a towel, scrubbing feet so his students would never forget, the importance of the holy lesson, of being clean, in order to fellowship with God is not something done or even eluded to in American universities.

Oh, the beauty and humility of Christ! Let us serve Him with a grateful heart, because He is the Fairest of them All.

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O Thou of God and man the Son,
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,
Thou, my soul's glory, joy and crown.

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;

Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
And all the twinkling starry host;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels heav'n can boast.

All fairest beauty, heavenly and earthly,
Wondrously, Jesus, is found in Thee;
None can be nearer, fairer or dearer,
Than Thou, my Savior, art to me.

Beautiful Savior! Lord of all the nations!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
Now and forevermore be Thine.

By August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben

84. THE PRECIOUS PURITY OF OUR LORD JESUS

^{NAS} Hebrews 7:25-26 . . . He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

Truth be known, we think too little of Christ.

We are a society with an abundance of self-esteem . . .but, we are very deficient in Christ-esteem.

The apostle addresses a problem of “neglecting so great a salvation” (2:2) and lurking in the darkness with deteriorating confidence in Jesus among the unstable Hebrews (10:35).

Many, on the peripherals of the gospel, took a quick glance at Christianity and retreated to the sensual, rigorous bondage of cultic Judaism to the destruction of their own soul (6:1-9:10:24-26).

But, you, dear reader, are not this way.

Let’s examine the precious purity of Christ in this text:

The paramount truth to grasp in this section is that Christ is able to save His people “to the uttermost” (7:25).

The idea behind the use of “uttermost” (*panteles*) is that of *fullness or completeness*; that is, Christ not only saves you, he saves all of you “lock stock and barrel;” not only does he save you now, he will save you a decade from now, a millennium from now, and a thousand eternities from now. Because He lives forever, His salvation is **f o r e v e r**.

His life stands between us and death.

The troubling question on the mind of the apostle is why would any Hebrew retreat to a religion that offers animal sacrifices every time they sinned and “twice on Sunday” sort of speak?

Our Lord, because of His eternal character, *saves to the uttermost!* The efficacy and extension and exhaustive power of this Savior, Priest, and Sacrifice has no flaws, defects, limits, weaknesses, variables, or imperfections. His accomplishments do not deteriorate over time or diminish because of our imperfections!

What makes Christ's sacrifice at Calvary and His consequent exaltation to the right hand of God as High Priest of God's people so eternally powerful?

The apostle lists His dove-like qualifications: "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;"

The priests in the Old Testament were only distinguished from other men by their appointment to office. Like us, the OT clergy were unholy, destructive, blemished, and alloyed with sinners.

But, not our Lord!

Let's look at His glorious qualifications to be God's High Priest, Mediator, and Intermediator between a thrice holy God and flawed men. Here we are permitted to gaze at the purity of Christ.

Holy (hosios):

What a beautiful word! It generally refers to a segment of time, or thing, or object that is separated from the common, and devoted exclusively to a Divine purpose. The first usage of the word *holy* is in reference to the seventh-day Sabbath (Genesis 2:3 -- a period of time -- Adam's first day on earth), to a spot of land set aside for God's purpose (holy ground-Exodus 3:2), offerings offered to God (Leviticus 2:3), and a person like Christ who was ordained for a sacred purpose.

It is the only virtue repeated three times in a row to describe the LORD God: "holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty," (Isaiah 6:3).

In the Song of Moses (Exodus 15:13), Miriam wrote, "thou hast guided *them* in thy strength unto thy holy habitation."

Who is qualified to mediate the needs of sinners in a holy place before a holy God? The answer is the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not only appointed to the holy position as High Priest, His whole being hummed with the "beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2).

Oh, how the Divine mind must be delighted and enchanted with the Son: one man on earth not absorbed with the will of man, but totally, wholly devoted to the Will of God!

Innocent (akakos):

This word means without guile, malice, or fraud. It is translated "harmless" in the KJV, "innocent" in the NASB, and "blameless" in the NIV. The essence of the law is *to do man no harm*. Our lord was not only harmless, he was gracious and good to flawed men.

Undefined (*amiantos*):

In the papyri the word *amiantos* is translated *untainted* and *stainless*. People discard stained shirts, rags, and foods. We admire white snow, value a clean white shirt, and demand pure, uncontaminated water to drink. Companies even advertise their products are made from “pure rocky mountain spring water” or made “from the land of sky blue waters.”

The apostle wants us to know that Christ was free of sin and moral defilement. Avarice, greed, selfishness, lust, meanness, anger, and bitterness never touched the fabric of His soul. We cannot say the same about the rest of mankind. How wonderful it is to have an undefined High Priest representing us before a holy, holy, holy God.

Separated from sinners (*chorismenos*):

This word means “to sever” or “to cut off.” It is the word used for divorce and is translated “put asunder” (Matthew 19:6), “depart” (Acts 1:4), “separate” (Romans 8:35), and “leave” in the 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 15^{NASB}. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “separate from sins.”

Don’t confuse separation with isolation. Jesus lived a separated life, but not an isolated one. He did not live hiding from the sins of humanity in a monastery or anchorite cave. He was in the world, but not of the world. Unlike us who need to have our feet washed of defilement from time to time figuratively speaking (John 13), our Lord lived, ate, worked, and conversed with men without being contaminated by them.

We are attracted to “the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-16), but our Lord lived apart from these vices as one purely devoted to the pleasures of His Father.

Though he took on the nature of man, He did not have a sinful nature. Though He was a man, He had none of earth’s vices, but He had all of Heaven’s virtues. He was born among sinners, lived with them, and worked beside them, yet He Himself “had no sin” (Hebrews 4:15), “did no sin” (1 Peter 2:22), and “knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Exalted above the heavens (*genomenos hupselos ouranos*):

This is a good translation. But, it could literally be translated, “made higher than the heavens.” It is a metaphor representing promotion and exaltation. Because nothing is higher than the heavens, the phrase was employed to express our Lord’s highly exalted life. He lives and reigns now as God’s High Priest King.

Biblically, heaven is a metaphor for God’s home. It is where He lives. A synonym for the kingdom of God is the kingdom of Heaven.

Because the stability of lunar, solar, and stellar cycles, the ancients looked to the heavens to discover absolute principles. Earth, with all its winds, storms, floods, and volcanic activity is deemed an unstable place full of vicious cycles and misfortunes. Consequently, men associate goodness with heaven and evil with earth.

Lofty rhetoric like this ought to induce humility and cause us to glory in the greatness and wonder of our Lord. Jews should forget the Talmud, the Levitical priesthood, and the temple ceremonies and know that Christ and His ministry as God's High Priest is as superior to the ancient Levitical system as the Sun is superior to the Moon.

What men need today is not more self-esteem, but more Christ-esteem. Because He is pure, let us be purely devoted to Him.

85. QUALIFYING A NEW PRESTHOOD

At the Last Supper in John 13:4-5, Jesus “got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

Traditionally, this passage has been interpreted as a lesson by Jesus on serving one another. While this is indeed one of the intended directives for the disciples, it’s not the most fundamental message in this chapter.

Another way to look at this amazing scene is that Jesus was qualifying his disciples for their **new role as priests of Almighty God.**

Consider the following as evidence that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in order to qualify them for their new ministry in the new, holy priesthood -- a kingdom of priests ([Exodus 19:6](#)) in a new and holy nation a.k.a. the New Israel, or the True Israel of God ([1 Peter 2:9-10](#); [Romans 9:6](#); [Galatians 6:16](#)).

(1) Peter refers to the church as a "holy priesthood" and as a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5-9) -- far superior to the Levitical priesthood. The church does not have a priesthood, the church is a priesthood. All believers are priests, though not all have qualified themselves to serve in this holy ministry.

(2) Jesus is the church's High Priest, the archetype of the Aaronic Priesthood ([Hebrews 5](#)). He established a new priesthood to service the grand and glorious holy temple of God ([1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#); [9:13](#); [Ephesians 2:21](#)).

(3) The priests in the Old Testament, Aaron and his sons, were qualified to be priests through the following sacred protocols:

- Washed with water (Leviticus 8:6)
- Clothed them with priestly vestments (8:7)
- Anointed with oil -- a symbol of the Holy Spirit (8:10)
- Identified with the bull of the sin offering (8:14)
- Identified with the ram of the burnt offering (8:19)
- Sprinkled with blood of the ordination ram -- a peace offering (8:22-23)
 - blood on the right ear so they could hear the Word of God
 - blood on the right thumb so they could serve the will of God
 - blood on the right toe so they could walk in the house of God

- Consecrated the hands with the bread offering placed on top of the oil, fat, and blood of the ordination ram with, and then offering it to the LORD as a wave offering (cake, meal, or grain offering) -- a type of the character of Christ (8:26-29).
- Sprinkled their priestly garments with oil and blood in order to consecrate them to this ministry -- even their garments had to be clean (8:30)
- Enjoyed a fellowship consecration meal in the Tabernacle (8:31)
- Seven-day period of consecration in the Tabernacle (8:32)

(4) Once ordained, Aaron and his sons, washed their hands and feet in the brazen laver every time they entered the Tent of Meeting to perform their daily duties . . . **lest they die**; that is, they not only had to be washed and cleansed when they were ordained, **THEY HAD TO BE WASHED** on a daily basis, week after week, month after month, and year after year, as a holy discipline **to maintain their qualifications to perform their priestly duties** ([Exodus 30:19-20](#)).

19 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:

20 When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:

This daily, discipline of washing with water is a giant symbolic device to educate us that (A) sin is very defiling and infectious, (B) that we live in a dirty, filthy, morally contaminated society, (C) that coming into contact with other people and modern modes of communications, we are easily defiled by the sins of others (and our own sin) ([James 4:1-7](#)); (D) that we (Christians) must be cleansed with the Washing of the Water of the Word and Confession of Sins on a daily basis in order that our prayers and service may be acceptable to Christ ([Ephesians 5:26](#); [1 John 1:9](#); [James 4:8](#)).

(5) As the priestly family had to be washed, clothed, and anointed with oil, the new priesthood has to be washed, clothed, and anointed with the Spirit.

- The disciples were baptized as a figure of separation from sin, identification with Christ (the sacrifice for sins, Savior, and High Priest) and dedication to God ([John 3:23](#); [John 4:1](#); [Acts 2:41](#))
- The disciples were cleansed by the blood of the Lamb ([Romans 5:9](#); [Ephesians 1:7](#))
- The disciples were clothed in robes of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10; [2 Corinthians 5:21](#))
- The disciples were anointed with the oil of the Spirit ([John 7:39](#); [1 John 2:27](#))
- The disciples had to personally, individually wash themselves and renew their devotion to holiness on a daily basis ([1 John 1:7-9](#))

In reference to the clothing consider the following:

All priests clothed themselves in sacred garments when ministering before God and serving the duties of reconciliation. According to instruction in the Book of Exodus these garments include “*a breast piece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash.*” ([28:4](#)).

When people believe in Christ, they are clothed in the holy garments of salvation. As priests in the New Holy Temple (the church), Christians receive a breast piece of truth, an ephod of salvation, a robe of righteousness, a woven tunic of peace, a turban of redemption, and a sash of faith ([Ephesians 6:14-17](#)). Christians are required to be washed with the Water of the Word and to wear priestly vestments while offering "up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" and proclaiming His praises to those still trapped in darkness ([1 Peter 1:5-9](#)). Believers are required to wear these vestments (righteousness and holiness) whenever they proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the sons of darkness.

[Note: The above vestments are spiritual. However, Paul required women to wear a physical, material veil on her head as a visible symbol of authority in temple services -- which is an icon of God's law-order. Paul advances three symbols in 1 Corinthians 11: the veil (or scarf), the bread, and the wine.]

(6) Jesus washes his disciples' feet to purify and cleanse them for their priestly service to God.

“Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” (the true temple of God) ([John 13:8](#)).

The washing of the disciples' feet can be compared to Exodus 30:20 wherein our Lord taught his followers to cleanse themselves regularly from defilement in order to preserve their qualification to serve in the new priesthood.

(7) Through this simple act of foot washing, Jesus demonstrates to His disciples His eternal role as God's High Priest and Mediator and their part in the new priesthood. This act assured them, even though he would be subjected to the cross, that God would hear his prayers and the prayers of the new priests:

“During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek” ([Hebrews 5:7-10](#)).

In John 13, our Lord performed His duty as High Priest to qualify his disciples as priests in the new priesthood, through the icon of foot washing -- an instructive tool to educate these men on the necessity of continual sanctification and the need to be cleansed from defilement.

As God's High Priest, our Lord ordained His disciples to be priests unto him. The church does not have a priesthood. It is a priesthood. Now sitting at the right hand of the Father, our Lord continues to pray on their behalf, "*he always lives to intercede for them*" ([Hebrews 7:25](#)), and will empower them through the Holy Spirit to perform their priestly duties to the glory of God. Moreover, His resurrected life stands between the disciples and death.

People sometimes ask me, "What do you do?" In my more zealous moments I say, "I am a priest of Almighty God! What do you do?"

Though this is true, I am reminded from John 13 how I must continually live a separated life and submit to the daily discipline of "self-cleansing" from defilements of the world picked up in the course of daily life.

Holiness is not an option. It is a requirement for priestly duty ([1 Peter 1:15ff](#)).

86. DO YOU WANT TO FOLLOW JESUS?

“Let us pass over to the other side” (Mark 4:35)

Let's take a boat ride with Jesus.

What a night! A vicious storm! Rowing blindly in the dark . . . in the rain! Waves crashing into the boat! Cold! Wet! Miserable! Shivering! Afraid for their lives, the disciples wake our Lord. He speaks to the storm, and the winds cease!

Arriving early in the morning on the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee, the band of soaked sailors are met by a scraggly madman running un-chained and naked through the tombs screaming and shouting obscenities at Jesus and his weary disciples. Bewildered by the scene, the twelve men stare at the scrawny, bearded maniac speaking in a shrilled voice using pronouns like “we” begging Jesus not to send “them” away out of the country.

What happens next is like something out of a Hollywood horror film. Adding to the morning confusion, the disciples hear oinking, shrieking shrills coming from several thousand pigs hoofing down the mountainside kicking up dust in a mad stampede toward the sea cliffs.

And, just as soon as it started, it ended. In the distance 2000 swine carcasses floated on the surface of the sea.

Within the hour, trustees from the village hog corporation arrived begging Jesus to leave their region. Jesus instructed the former madman to stay in the area and tell others what great things the Lord did for him. He motioned to the disciples to get back into the boat and they sailed quietly back towards Capernaum.

Why did Jesus go to the other side of the lake?

Because there was a man in distress there that needed his assistance (salvation). Did the Lord know about the storm? Did he know the squall would frighten the disciples and scare the heebie-jeebies out of them? Did He know they would row all night while wet and cold . . . half of the next day . . . and without food or sleep? Yes, He did. Did he know they would be traumatized by the naked demoniac, the stampeding swine, and the inhospitable villagers? Of course!

So, you want to walk with Jesus! How nice! Walking with Christ is not a pleasure cruise to the Caribbean! It is more like this boat ride on a stormy Sea of Galilee meeting madmen and merchants who don't want their business hurt by some preacher.

Sweet Jesus does not mind if you get cold and wet on a mission. Our Lord is not troubled exhausting your physical, mental, and emotional resources to reach others for Christ. Sweet Jesus may deplete your finances, your relationships, and take you way outside your comfort zones to rescue one, single man for Christ. Jesus may exhaust you, bend you, and break you, but He won't ask you to go where He has not gone.

So, do you still want to follow Jesus?

87. THE LAST WORDS OF JESUS

Cruci dum spiro fido –

“As long as I breathe, I will remember the cross.”

His Sayings on the Cross

FIRST WORD

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Luke 23:34

What a wonderful response by a man just having his hands and feet pierced with raw Roman spikes to die on a cross! Blasphemy and cursing, one can understand! But, an offer of forgiveness to His executioners . . . who can imagine?

Settling down from the jolt of impalement with heart racing, Jesus stares with wounded eyes at the Romans gambling for His seamless robe, and tenderly prays, “Father, forgive them!”

Oh, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! What magnanimity! What majesty! What dignity! He not only forgives their ignorance, but their dirty deed and the dreadful pain it caused.

The “them” is limited to the Roman principes who were merely obeying the barbarous orders of their superiors. This extension of forgiveness could not judiciously apply to the malicious fraud and conspiracy of those Jews who levied false accusations against Him.

So hideous is the thought that Christ was forgiving the Sanhedrin that some students of the Bible have attempted to translate the text, “Father, forgive them not!” But, this is incorrect! In Greek the negation precedes the verb. Thus the negation particle “ou” applies to the verb “know” and not the verb “forgive.” It is properly translated, “Father forgive them.”

When Jesus gazed at them from the cross, he did not see professional soldiers who needed more pay . . . but sinners who needed forgiveness. Their souls in danger, Jesus cries out for clemency in order to protect them from the fierceness of the wrath of God.

In forgiving, our Lord provided for the Romans’ greatest need. Man’s greatest need is not meat and potatoes, shekels or healing or bruised self-esteem, but forgiveness of their sins. Man has no power to forgive himself! He can only obtain this grace from the Creditor Who has authority to cancel the debt owed. And, the One injured grants these guards immunity from the crimes of the State against Him.

SECOND WORD

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Luke 23:43

His second word is also about forgiveness.

Now it is not just the religious leaders and the soldiers that mocked Jesus, but the crucified criminals beside him joined in the banter and jeers against Him.

But, something happens to the criminal on the right. The circuits in his mind overloaded with signals of death, eyes wrinkled with fear, the criminal comes to his senses. Through the slits of his swollen eyes, he observes God’s Lamb. He’s not like other men; His regal character shines from His golden assets even on the cross. He is more than an ordinary man; more than a good man. He perceives that Jesus is what the crowds touted Him to be . . . the King of Israel. . . the Son of God the Savior of the world . . . and, maybe, just maybe, his Savior!

The hour glass running out of sand, his conscience overloaded with guilt, laboring to breathe, his heart softens. Staring at Christ through heavy eyes, the thief mutters a death-bed prayer: “Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.” (Luke 23:42).

What faith! What repentance! What a change in heart! What a simple plea to secure his future!

Ignoring His own pain, escaping the vortex of His own suffering, Jesus offers words of assurance, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." The promise is true. It comes with authority, “I tell you . . .” Death is not the end. He would live . . . with Christ . . . in Paradise restored . . . a forgiven man . . . as a de jure member of the kingdom of God . . . and a partaker of the Tree of Life! What grace!

“Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left” (Luke 23:32–33).

One thief repented, the other lost.

One thief was saved that we might not despair; one was lost that we might not presume.

THIRD WORD

"Jesus said to his mother: "Woman, this is your son." Then he said to the disciple: "This is your mother." John 19:26-27

Four bewildered loved ones stare at the foot of the cross, Mary his Mother, John, the disciple whom he loved, his mother's sister Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. He addresses his third word to his mother Mary and his disciple John, the only eye-witness of the Gospel authors.

Who can describe the legion of conflicting emotions that filled Mary's heart (and the others) as she saw her son struggling to fulfill Calvary's ghastly fate? She had no power to prevent the death walk. Limp with grief, bent with age, tears flow down the crevices of her motherly cheeks. In a state shock, words are frozen in the mind.

Before us is the wounded, elder son tenderly providing for his mother. Obedient to the command, "Honor your mother," our Lord commends the care of his elderly mother into the hands of John, the youngest disciple. In so doing, he secures her future.

What a man! Though staked helplessly on that cross, his concern is about others. He prays for the forgiveness of soldiers, assures the thief that he will be in heaven, and secures the future of his mother on earth.

FOURTH WORD

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34

This expression by our Lord is only recorded in Matthew and Mark. Mark refers to Christ being crucified at the "third hour," and that darkness sucked light from the earth from "the sixth hour to the ninth hour." He uttered these last words shortly after the "ninth hour."

Our Lord was crucified at 9:00 in the morning. At 12:00 noon a strange darkness blanketed the earth wherein our Lord endured His plague of wrath for three long hours. At the end, Mark adds this grisly detail, "And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last" (Mark 15:37).

This expression of being forsaken is found in Psalm 22:1. In this hymn, the psalmist expresses his suffering with poetic hyperbole not fully aware that his metaphor would literally be fulfilled in the experience of Messiah. David, along with many in Israel, felt forsaken by God. But, Christ bore the shock of actual desertion by the Father and the Spirit.

Psalm 22, a co-typical Messianic Psalm, is a striking prophecy of the crucifixion of the Messiah at a time when the cold-blooded death had not yet been invented by cruel men: "They have pierced my hands and my feet, they have numbered all my bones" (22:16-17); and, "They divide my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots" (22:18).

The expression, “My God (First Person of the Trinity), My God (Third Person of the Trinity) why has thou forsaken me (Second Person of the Trinity) is a question. Our Lord uttered this sacred text, not because He did not know why He was suffering, but so we might contemplate the nature of His passion and the reason for His affliction during these three, long, dark hours.

You may feel abandoned by God, but you are assured your will never be deserted: for he said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5). There are five negatives in the Greek text. It is the strongest way in Greek to state a negation. The text could be translated “I will never, never, no, never, never forsake you.”

In Hebrew, there is a positive promise attached to the negation, “I will be with you.” The Hebrew word for “with” (em) actually means “companionship” or “fellowship” or “together with” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

But, not so with Christ. How can we describe Him being forsaken at Calvary? He knew what it is like to be abandoned like an unwanted child on the steps of an orphanage; to be unplugged from the Source; to be the last leaf on a winter’ limb; to be swept out into an endless sea away from the safety of the shore; to be like a wandering star; like a violin in a marching band; like a pelican in the desert; like a cat in bathwater; like a rose in a junk yard; like a dog without his master; like a Jew in in a Mosque; or like a prisoner in solitary confinement. He knew the loneliness and the hell of it so that we might never feel like a goldfish out of water or like a baby panda looking for its mom or a lost lamb surrounded by a pack of starving wolves. Pick whatever metaphor you want, nothing can fully describe what it was like for the Son to be forsaken.

Why would the Father and the Spirit forsake the Son? The psalmist provides a hint, “Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.” In the eyes of the Hebrew, the throne of Israel was represented by the Ark of the Covenant guarded by two cherubim. Inside the Ark were the two stone tablets on which the law was written. Thus, the “the praises of Israel” is the law of the LORD God (22:3).

In the first three hours on the cross, our Lord experienced all the grueling, grisly pain that man could afflict on another human being by crucifixion; but, in the second three hours of the bitter fate, our Lord experienced all the punishment the eternal One could inflict on the eternal Son. Carrying our transgressions against the law on his shoulder, the Lamb became the target of God’s wrath. *Because He was a man, He could die for us. Because He was God, He could die enough.*

There the pure, harmless Lamb was converted into an ugly, despicable Serpent (John 3:14). He Who was without sin, and knew no sin, became sin for us. There the punishment for law

breaking was placed on the Lamb. Thus, the Holy Ones abandoned the unholy One. Turning their backs, so to speak, the Father and Spirit forsook the Son.

God forsaken of God! Who can understand it? What a terrible thing sin must be!

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

What a thought! If he died for all our sin, how much sin do we still have to pay for? The answer is closer to none than some.

One would do well to consider the ocean of anguish that flooded the Savior's soul while pinned to the main mast, and then abandoned by the Spirit while sailing on an angry sea swelling under the fury of God's wrath.

Can you hear the cry of a drowning heart – an innocent Defendant, indicted for our sin, punished by the righteous Judge -- a man forsaken by God – an only Son deserted by His Father – a pure soul abandoned by the Holy Spirit? Who can describe the shock, the burn, the desolation, the helplessness, the agony, the suffocation, the fracture, the rift, the alienation, the torment, the heartache, and bitter loneliness contained in the gasping query, "Why have You forsaken me"?

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

God is holy! Oh, how our sin must have hurt Him. The Son, seeing the Father's pain, surrendered Himself to become the brunt of His holy wrath. Feeling the full fury of the Father's hatred of sin, he knowingly, willingly became the Condemned to propitiate the Spirit's zeal for justice. Moreover, He became our Substitute that we might never experience one drop of God's wrath for our sins. In those three hours, the Father laid on him the burden of eternal suffering to satisfy His law . . . and His love for you and me.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

FIFTH WORD

"I thirst." John 19:28

Who can describe the terrible sufferings of a dying man on a cross? The piercing pain of spikes in the hands and feet, the struggle to breathe, the bleeding, the throbbing heart, the cold chills, the fever, the aches, and the dry throat and dehydration of our Lord are squeezed into one word, “dipsao,” (“I thirst”).

It was not hunger that afflicted our Lord, but burning thirst!

His head hurt too much. His arms and feet and back hurt too much. It seemed that every joint in his aching limbs hurt too much. Every move on that splintery post sent ripples of misery through his shoulders, back and neck. Like a sharp toothed piranha, thirst devoured his insides. Every cell in his afflicted body begged for water. Slowly, pain shuttled reports back to his brain that death was near. Over the cuts, bruises, and punctures could be heard a whisper from his dry, swollen lips, “dipsao!”

Oh, the cursing, complaints, groans, tears, screams, and blasphemies that bitter men must have muttered in the final hours of their miserable life! But, the only word expressed by our Savior about his private pain was compacted in one word, “dipsao” (I thirst.). And, that for our benefit so we might somehow perceive the terrible agony He endured on the cross.

Why did Jesus walk through Death Valley? Because he loves us.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

If you are looking for proof with strict proof of claim that God loves you, it is compacted in one word, “dipsao.”

SIXTH WORD

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished;" and he bowed his head and handed over the spirit. John 19:30

The offering of wine on a tuff of hyssop to quench Jesus’ thirst reminds us of the hyssop used to sprinkle the blood of the lamb on the door posts during the first Passover in Egypt. Christ died on Wednesday about 3:00 PM on the Day of Preparation along with other memorial lambs just hours before the Passover meal began at 6:00 that evening.

In the beginning of the Fourth Gospel, John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the nation as the “Lamb which takes away the sins of the world.” “It is finished” announces the completion of redemption. The law upheld, the Lamb sacrificed, justice levied, sins propitiated, the vicarious sufferings of Christ now attain legal effect for the salvation of men to all who believe.

Not only is Jesus presented as the Lamb of God in John, He is identified as the “King of Israel” (1:49) who the people wanted to forcibly install as King of the Nation (6:16). At His trial before the Roman Governor, Pilate introduces Him, “Behold your King!” (19:14). The *titlos* (inscription) on the cross read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (19:19).

Unlike the synoptics which shine the light on Jesus humanity, John presents the majestic Christ warring against malversation and the subterranean trinity of evil (Satan, sin, and death). Singlehandedly with fierce dignity and courage, He marches to the battlefield, “bearing his own cross” (19:7). Having completed His mission “to save His people from their sins,” enemies crushed, and being wounded unto death, He announces the victory, “*testelestai*,” “It is finished!”

This is not a helpless, defeated Christ, but a victorious King in control of His spirit to the very end: Who “handed over the Spirit” to the Father.

The piercing of his side in the final insult fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 12:10: "They will look on me whom they have pierced." The dual symbols should not be missed.

*John 19:34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out **blood and water.***

The Price of Redemption: Blood, the currency of the spirit world, was poured on the altar to discharge the debt of sin. Thus, He completed the prophecy of Abel who initiated this bloody religion.

The Baptism of the Spirit: Water, a symbol of life and spirit gush forth with iconic meaning. The One who spoke of living water in John 3:5, 4:10, referenced living water as the Holy Spirit in 7:37-39 during the Feast of Tabernacles, and Who announced that He would ask the Father to send "another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth" at the Last Supper (14:16-17) grants a visible sign of the Coming Spirit. This Feast of Pentecost launched a new era of spirit-filled men empowered to keep the law and to share the good news of the accomplishments of Christ to the entire world.

The first words of Jesus were, “I must be about my father’s business.” Here, He announces it is finished.

SEVENTH WORD

**Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."
Luke 23:46**

Mission accomplished, in control until the end, the Savior peers through a portal into eternity to fulfill the prophetic hymn,

Psalm 31:5 - "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God."

Who can understand the mysteries taking place between the Father God and God the Son who was "slain before the foundation of the world?" There were proceedings happening at the cross that only the Father and the Son can comprehend. (Revelation 13:8)

This is the dutiful Son as the Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1) extinguishing His last drop of devotion to the will of His Heavenly Father "being obedient unto death" (Philippians 2:12). His mission complete, "he bowed his head and handed over the spirit." He breaths his last.

"Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent" (Luke 23:47).

"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7).

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

"I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father" (16:28).

The word "commend" (*paratithemi*) is a present, middle indicative verb, and it is translated "to put before" (Matthew 13:24) "to set before" (Luke 8:16) or "commit" (Acts 14:32). It is Jesus Who with the eye of light acts on Himself. He exits this life through a portal between heaven and earth into a mysterious field of blessed intelligent energy to place His conscious Spirit into His Father's hands. The cross is heaven's stargate.

*John 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might **take it** again.*

And, He does . . . three days later . . . in a literal, tangible, physical resurrection . . . on the first-day Sabbath . . . that we might find rest for our souls. The cross is heaven's stargate – the link between heaven and earth. If you want to enter Paradise, you must meet God at the cross.

Cruci dum spiro fido

88. THE GLORIES OF CHRIST IN THE STORY OF THE PARALYTIC,

Part I

“Do you want to be made whole?” – John 5

John 5:1-21

This passage is read by the Greeks during Pentecostarion, the fifty-day period between Easter / Passover and Pentecost. It is a time of reflection . . . of standing. No kneeling is permitted in church services.

Because the Book of John reveals the mysteries of our Lord, they read this passage on one of the Sundays leading up to the Celebration of the Feast of Pentecost.

They believe the newly baptized (catechumens) can begin to understand the wonders of our Lord as they reflect on the greatness of the Savior. They want their adult converts to grasp the marvelous mysteries of the Son revealed in the Book of John.

Some think this account happened during Passover; those in East consider it to be the Feast of Pentecost.

Having seen the greatness of the Christ event, John simply refers to this festival as a *Feast of the Jews*, a pejorative description emphasizing not only the apostasy of the Jews from Biblical faith, but an alert to their dribbling cavil regarding their legalistic insentience pertaining to the Sabbath.

The Greek Orthodox Churches read this passage during Pentecostarion because they want their catechumens to learn the glories of Christ from this chapter. We will look at a few of them.

The Spirit shows us the Love of Christ.

Jesus sought the paralytic. This is a story about the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep. It is not a story about a lost sheep seeking the Shepherd.

Jesus went to the Pool of Bethesda near the Sheep Gate, and like a great physician who looks for the sickest man in the room, our Lord made it a point to meet this paralytic of 38 years. Like the

Jews, we would have avoided this embarrassing man. But, not Jesus. Where ever He went, the Savior looked for souls who needed him.

Moreover, the paralytic was not seeking Jesus. Jesus sought him. This story is not about the seeking paralytic, but the seeking Shepherd! The only reason any of us “find” Christ is because Christ first finds us! He is the One who leaves the ninety-and-nine to search for the one lost lamb.

Oh, that more Christians in this self-obsessed world were like the Lord who had their eyes open and took an interest in the souls of others.

The Spirit shows us the Wisdom of Christ

We are told this man, probably in his fifties, was a paralytic. He had a broken body. More than “physically challenged,” he was a thirty-eight year paraplegic.

And, we have to ask, “Can good come out of evil?” The answer is “Yes!”

Affliction is good if it leads us to seek the Great Physician and to hate sin more.

There are men today who know little of weakness, of suffering, and of oppression. Without distress, we’d never discover the love and power of Christ. No trouble, not testimony!

Deliver us, O Lord, from being self-made, proud men who have no problems, no troubles, and no need for Christ. Paul took pleasure “in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, and in distresses” because “the power of God is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Before us is a sick man with a sick soul depleted of hope.

Apparently, the spring of water at the Sheep Gate Pool had healing qualities. Miracles of healing were known to happen there. The Spirit attributed these medical remedies to the work of an angel who stirred the waters opening a window of opportunity for the sick to experience its curative powers. The man had been there 38 years. He’d seen the waters stir 38 times, and 38 times he was unable to reach the source of healing: 38 seasons; 38 failures; 38 times *he must have concluded it wasn’t God’s will for him to be cured.*

Who can imagine how these thoughts must have poisoned his soul?

In approaching the paralytic, Jesus rifled a question to this invalid, “Do you want to be made whole?”

Our Lord never asked a question because he did not know the answer. In His wisdom, He asked the question so the afflicted man would rummage through the clutter in his closet for a suitable answer. His physical extremities had not only paralyzed his body, but his soul. Possibly, he had given up and simply lost hope. Maybe, he didn't have the will to fight or even to live. Tragically, some invalids find comfort in being sick and needy. Likewise, some souls are content to be slaves of despair and hopelessness.

Sometimes we are like paralytics who have given up trying to fight a disease, pay bills, repair a marriage, correct a difficult child, or build a church. Jesus still asks, "Do you want to be made whole? Do you want to be delivered from the power of your personal sins?"

A crippled body is one problem, a crippled will is quite another.

The great questions everyone must ask are, "Do I know I am a moral paralytic? "Do I want to be made whole?"

Dear paralytic brothers and sisters. Let us rejoice that Christ heals moral cripples. Who among us has obeyed God's law perfectly? Who is strong enough to bear all the infirmities caused by our personal sins . . . and the sins of our time? Our age loves the self-made man—the semi-omnipotent man, the illusive bone-crushing Rambo. Frank Sinatra boasted, "I did it my way." Ivanka Trump wrote an article entitled, "You are the only person who can create a life you will love." Really? Try telling that to the paralytic!

Lord, deliver us if we think we are strong. Our life is *a vapor* (James 4:14) . . . *a flower of the field* (Psalm 103:15). Show us how Christ is the answer to all the infirmities of our soul.

We should note the gruesome selfish nature of man in this passage.

When asked, "Do you want to be made whole?" the paralytic said, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool."

"I have no man" to help me was the terrible testimony of the paralytic. There was no man who took interest in him, to care for him, to love him. He was alone . . . an island in the sea of pain, wounded on the battlefield left to die, a pelican in the desert, a lost sheep without a fold, a lonely bird that had been blown off course during a storm in life.

Loneliness was a vice poisoning the marrow of his bones, the midnight cloud that blocked the light of hope, the piercing pain that fueled his nightmares, the bitter cold that sucked the warmth of joy out of his heart, the ugly shadow that lay beside him during the heat of the day, the pack of dogs that ripped sinew from the bones of his soul in the darkness.

Sadly, his statement was true . . . “There was no man!” He was surrounded by spiritual paraplegics. There wasn’t a Jew in Jerusalem who cared spit about the man . . . or his infirmity. All spiritual leaders were helpless. David groaned, “no man careth for my soul” (Psalm 142:4).

Like men today, everyone was looking out for number one -- every man for himself! Narcissistic men and women can’t escape the gravitational pull of their own lusts and desires. Man is drunk with his self-absorbing ego. Few men overcome bondage to self. The daily drill is all about “I,” “me,” and “my.”

It was said of President Franklin D. Roosevelt that he was so self-absorbed that when he went to a wedding, he wanted to be the bride; and, when he went to a funeral, he wanted to be the corpse. Believe it? When is the last time someone showed interest in you or asked you questions about your opinion or beliefs? When was the last time you went shopping and looked for someone to minister to?

Self-centered men are quite common, but charitable people are quite rare. But, Jesus came to serve! The Great Shepherd of the sheep searched, saw, and found this lost soul to minister to him.

We should note the vanity of trusting man.

The paralytic sought the help of man to assist him down to the waters . . . and this proved to be a false hope.

Psalm 118:8 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

The Spirit shows us the Power of Christ

When the paralytic expressed there was no man to help him, Jesus said, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.” He did!

What Jesus commands, He also supplies strength to do. No sooner did He give the order, than healing power permeated the paralytic. Jesus did not help him down to the water, Jesus was the Source of All Healing.

While the Bible teaches us that God is sovereign and saves His elect, it also teaches us about human responsibility.

The Lord never commands his people to do something He does not empower them to do. The question is not will we have power to obey, but do we have the will to obey? “Do you want to be made whole? Or holy? Or obedient? Or humble? Or pure? Or to serve?”

Do you want to know God? Then pick up your Bible and study.

Do you want to be a great husband? Then pick up a dish rag and start scrubbing plates.

Do you want to lose weight? Then put down the potato chips and go for a walk.

Do you want to be a soul winner? Then pick up your Bible and start meeting people.

Do you want be a good friend? Then pick up the phone and make the call.

Do you want to be a servant of God? Then gird yourself with a towel and wash your brother's feet.

Do you want to be made whole spiritually? Seek Jesus.

Do you want to be a true Christian? Take up your cross, deny self, and follow your Lord.

You will not find healing in pills or pot or psychology or philosophy or some eastern religion or Mother Earth. Power belongs to Christ.

The Lord came into the world to save paralytics . . . to save lost sheep. Let us not seek fantasies and fictions . . . or psychologists or politicians. Let us recognize our own paralysis and respond to the strong, crucified, risen Savior calling us to Himself. Our life is transient and withering, but in Him there is the hope of being made whole.

Part II

“Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.”

We stated in Part I that the Story of the Paralytic is read in Greek Orthodox Churches during the period known as Pentecostarion. Because the Book of John reveals the mysteries of our Lord, they read this passage on one of the Sundays leading up to the Celebration of the Feast of Pentecost.

They want new converts to reflect on the greatness of the Savior . . . and the first lesson he gave to the neophyte. Pentecostarion is a time for catechumens to grasp the marvelous mysteries of the Son revealed in the Book of John . . . their deliverance from the Jewish Sabbatical burdens . . . and the need for young converts to stop sinning.

While the Greek Orthodox Church as well as other denominations practice a First-day Sabbath rule, they do so without the harsh punishments associated without Jewish legalism.

John the Baptist introduced Christ as the One who would baptize men with the Spirit in John 1:33, and it is the Spirit that continues to instruct us about freedom in this chapter . . . and responsibility that leads to freedom.

The Spirit shows us the Lord of the Sabbath and His liberty.

There is no liberty without responsibility. The paralytic obeyed and received the strength to rise up, pick up his bed, and walk upright and whole.

While on his journey, the Sabbath Police observed a Sabbath violation and charged him with a statutory crime: “it is not lawful for thee to carry *thy* bed.” The censors would have stopped anyone carrying something on the Seventh Day. They even had Scripture on their side, “Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day” (Jeremiah 17:21).

Moreover, it is even more disturbing to think the Sabbath Police recognized the man as the one who had been a cripple for decades, and then chastised him for such a petty thing as walking and carrying his bed on the day of his liberation. But, censors are like that. Unthankful, ungrateful, and unappreciative, these joy-robbers had no capacity to appreciate the good Christ did for the man that day.

The healed man defended his actions, “He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed.” And, why shouldn’t he? The man was under a new Commander—the Lord of the Sabbath that had set him free from 38 years of bondage, and gave him the order to carry his pallet and walk.

Christ is Lord of the Sabbath! He gave the man rest from his 38 years of oppression. He did good and not evil. He relieved stress, and did not create a mess for others to clean up. The One Who gives us life is the One we are to obey.

The Spirit shows us that Christ is our Source of Law.

Source of Liberty must also be the Source of Law.

Believers are set free from the cultic regulations of Judaism. But they are not set free from law. Men are not saved by law, but they are saved in order to keep the law. *There is all the difference in the world between being saved by law and being saved to keep the law.*

The one who gives us liberty must be recognized as the Lawgiver . . . our Source of Law . . . the One to Whom we owe obedience . . . worship . . . honor (James 4:12, John 15:10; and 1 Peter 1:2).

The Spirit shows us the Omniscience of Christ

The professional accusers asked, “What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?”

The man did not even know the name of his physician. Men receive bread from heaven in answer to prayer, but fail to recognize Him as the “Bread of Life.”

It appears the man had little interest in Christ, but our Lord had a great interest him. But “Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple . . .” (5:14).

The Lord knows where we are and what we are doing. He even knew why the man was afflicted by paralysis. And, He gave the man his first Theology lesson, “sin no more . . .”

Oh, that more believers might be instructed in steps to maturity, “sin no more!”

We learn that Christ knows about our sin.

After his regeneration, Jesus found the man in the temple, and said unto him, “Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.”

We can infer from these words that the man’s affliction was due to some sin in his youth. Perhaps, at an age of accountability he violated a natural law, and experienced an accident where the results were catastrophic—paralysis.

We learn from this account, that sin is the cause of many afflictions we experience in life. Not all suffering is due to our personal sin, but some are. Let us be warned.

Further, Christ knows all about us . . . our sins . . . our foolishness . . . our moral failures.

We learn that no amount of suffering purifies the soul from sin.

One would think that former life-lessons sufficient to deliver a man from the power of sin. But no amount of mere suffering purifies the soul from sin. Thirty-eight years of affliction did not purge the man of his foolishness. Suffering did not make him a saint. It took an act of Jesus to make him whole. The man was healed by the grace of God, not by affliction alone.

Suffering with saving grace, however, can make a saint out of a sinner.

We learn about the power of sin in this passage.

Jesus instructed the man, “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.”

The natural inference from these words is that his deformity was due to a transgression in his youth. And, unless he began to recognize the power of sin in his life and judge it, worse things might come upon him.

Jesus imposed upon the man the duty to say “No!” to sin and “Yes!” to righteousness. He could walk and experience freedom from his infirmity . . . but he was not free from moral duty to God’s Law-word. Christ freed the man from his affliction, and he freed the man from the cultic laws of Judaism, but he did not free him from law. Liberty is about freedom from artificial man-made regulations that choke the life out of a man. Freedom is not about anarchy and lawlessness. No one is free if other men are not committed to the Ten Commandments. Antinomianism has no place in the Christian life. As we said earlier, there is all the difference in the world between being saved by law, and having a duty to obey God’s law. We are saved by grace so that we might have the power to do what the (moral) law commands. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,” commanded Jesus (Matthew 5:48).

*Psalm 101:6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a **perfect** way, he shall serve me.*

We learn that man does not improve with age.

Sin tempts the old as well as the young. The weeds of lust, pride, fear, anger, idolatry, adultery, compromise, uncleanness, strife, cowardliness, and heresies must be plucked from our garden during every stage of life. From the cradle to the grave, sin is our enemy. No matter what our age, we need the power of God to fight the power of sin at work in our person. *We are never too old to stop sinning. We are never too young to learn the word “No!”*

Oh, beloved let not any of us think that we’ve seen the worst of what sin can do! We need to fear men less and fear sin more. We simply don’t fear sin enough. The fear of punishment has its place in Christian catechism. Jesus warned the man that a worse thing will fall upon him if he did not confront the energy of sin stirring within. And, his lifetime of suffering had not broken the power of sin prodding him.

The Spirit show us the Power of Christ for Sanctification

The good news is that not only does Christ command us to sin no more He give us strength to sin no more!

Holiness is possible . . . even probable! Just as Christ empowered the man to rise up and walk, He empowers us to walk away from the Poisonous Tree.

Christ asked the man, “Do you want to be made whole?” Apparently, the man searched his core and found a true desire to be well. It was then Christ infused him with strength and gave him the power to rise up and walk.

Likewise, each of us must ask ourselves, “Do I want to be free from the power of sin?” To the one who wants to “sin no more,” Christ infuses him with moral courage. If our own will is too weak, Christ’s will is always wonderful. Identify your will with Christ’s will, and Christ will give you the will to sin no more.

While sinlessness is more of an impossibility than a probability, sinning less is a probability and not an impossibility.

What is a greater heresy, to teach believers they can be sinless or to teach believers they should be content with their sinful imperfection? Jesus commands, “sin no more.” (See Romans 6:1-11).

The Spirit shows the Omnipotence of Jesus

Jesus taught the people seven ways He was equal to the Father (5:19ff) and one of them is His quickening power (5:21).

There is no known cure for paralysis. But, Jesus infused life into the man. Moreover, He went on to instruct his audience, that just as he had “quicken” the paralytic, He is able to “quicken” (zoo, poieo) or “make alive” the dead (5:21).

And, this is the Christian hope. That earth experienced a Divine visitation in the Person of Christ is the ultimate, essential, paramount truth of history. It is far more important to recognize Heaven’s invasion to earth than it is to chase after illusory alien sightings and UFOs in the heavens. The God-man was on earth defeating Satan, sin, and death. No matter what problem we face . . . even death . . . the Lord Jesus Christ can “make alive” and conquer the grave.

He is the God of the impossible. Christ, not death, is Lord!

And, for those who hear His word, and believeth on him that sent the Son, they shall have everlasting life. They shall not come into condemnation; but are passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

Part III

JESUS’ EQUALITY WITH GOD

This is a passage read by the Greek Orthodox Church between Passover and the Celebration of Pentecost because it reveals the glories of Christ.

Our Lord healed the paralytic, and then was confronted by the Sabbath Police about ordering the paralytic to carry his pallet on the Sabbath.

Since He is *Lord of the Sabbath*, and since it is lawful to do good on this day, there was nothing to defend. Rather, our Lord used the occasion to reveal His equality with the Father. Let us never forget that in Christ, mankind experienced the invasion of heaven to earth, a Divine visitation, -- the most important event in history!

EQUAL WITH GOD

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:17)

EQUAL IN ABILITY

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19)

EQUAL IN KNOWLEDGE

For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. (John 5:20).

EQUAL IN REGENERATION

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will (John 5:21).

EQUAL IN JUDGMENT

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (John 5:22).

EQUAL IN HONOR

That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him (John 5:23).

EQUAL IN RESURRECTION POWER

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live (John 5:24).

EQUAL IN SELF EXISTENCE

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself (John 5:26).

EQUAL IN AUTHORITY

And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man (John 5:27)

Father, we thank you for revealing yourself to us in the son. Blessed be Your Name!

89. THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD

Part I

Have you ever wondered about how to get God's attention . . . how you can have power with God?

Let's take a look at the message of the first prophet in the Bible.

We would do well to learn the message of the Prophet Abel announced to mankind (Luke 11:50-51).

*"That the blood of **all the prophets**, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; **From the blood of Abel** unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation."*

PROPHET ABEL HAS A MESSAGE FOR MEN

Cain and Abel were both born sinners.

Both were brothers in the same fallen family.

Both Cain and Abel needed a right standing in the eyes of their Creator.

Cain brought beans, broccoli, and beets -- the hard-earned fruits of his labor to God, but the LORD was nonplussed by his offering.

Abel brought blood and God accepted his offering.

Abel proclaimed a truth: *men are redeemed by blood . . . that blood speaks to God . . . that God values blood sacrifice . . . that Messiah is coming Who will shed His precious blood for the sins of men.*

THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD

Of what interest is vegetables or silver and gold to a living Spirit? Every voodoo doctor in New Orleans knows that *"blood is the currency of the spirit world; that blood attracts the spirits."*

And, so it is with the Christian religion: "without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

Blood is the currency of the spiritual world and blood speaks to God. The blood of Abel's lamb *shouted* out for pardon. The blood of Abel *cried* out for vengeance. And, the blood of Christ *thunders* forgiveness for trusting sinners.

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.

Genesis 4:10 And he said, “. . . the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

Not all blood matters . . . but innocent blood speaks, shouts, cries, conveys, communicates, and discharges debt to a holy God.

If you want to get God's attention, forget your petty, puny, peddling goodness upon which you rely in approaching the Creator.

Rely upon the shed blood of Christ; that is, "under stand" or "stand under" the blood of Christ as your clearance to enter His presence.

GOD LOVES CLEAN

God is holy; man is a sinner. What can a sinner do to cleanse his soul? What liquid detergent can remove the stain of sin? Will fasting or meditation or alms giving purify the heart? Oh, that it was that simple! But, it isn't! There is no religious practice that can delete man's transgressions. There is no detergent in the world that can sanitize the heart. *But, the blood of Christ can satisfy the claims of Almighty God, and cleanse the conscience.*

Heavenly Father, thank you for paying the price of redemption through the blood of Your Son. Who can grasp it?

Part II

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF BLOOD IN CHRISTIANITY

*Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with **blood**; and without shedding of **blood** is no remission.*

Blood is the currency of the spirit-world.

The difference between Talmudic Judaism, Islam, the pantheistic cults, and Christianity is that Christianity teaches that blood, not good deeds, is the currency that must be paid to redeem the soul.

Christianity is a *bloody religion* through and through. In ancient Israel, blood flowed like a river from the temple into the Kidron Valley. Hundreds of thousands of lambs, birds, goats, and bulls spilled their blood at the site.

From the animals killed to provide clothing for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) to the death of Christ (John 18-19), the Scripture teaches one fundamental truth: Blood must be shed to pay for sin! Blood must be on the altar to gain acceptance before the LORD God of the Bible. God is just, and He cannot ignore, whitewash, avoid, overlook, or turn a blind eye to transgressions against His law. Blood is the only currency received by the Great Spirit in exchange for the soul.

Modern man with his love of money and psychological gimmicks fall short of achieving his spiritual ambitions because he fails to grasp that blood is the only lawful tender accepted between spirits and mortals. Talmudic Jews substitute prayer for propitiatory blood sacrifice. Muslims practice the five pillars of Islam: faith, prayer, alms giving, fasting, and treks to Mecca. Hindus believe *karma marga* (works) is the way of salvation.

Humanly speaking, blood is a powerful subject.

There is something in all of us that causes us to react to blood. The sight of that bright red fluid -- whether it was coming from an enemy or friend or yourself -- provokes fear and awe. Hemophobia is the fear of blood. Blood is associated with such powerful concepts that some people can't stand the sight of it. Many faint at the sight of a blood.

Blood is life. Blood is power and vitality—when you push yourself, your heart pounds and your pulse races as your blood rushes to supply oxygen to exhausted cells. A woman bleeds during her menstrual cycle, there's blood at childbirth. A drop of blood is your human signature. Your blood contains DNA and not only identifies your individual characteristics, but your entire family history. If you donate blood you might be saving someone's life. Blood banks are the first aid of life. Transfusion saves lives.

Genesis 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood:

Even in the French Quarter of New Orleans where Voodoo Queens practice love spells and curses, necromancers understand that to summon the gods of the underworld, blood must be mixed with frog hairs and toenails to attract the spirits.

Blood magic is the use of a few drops of blood, usually your own, to summon the gods of power. Even ancient Egyptians understood that mediation between the goat-gods and man required blood—lots of blood. Drinking blood, washing in blood, and sprinkling blood on symbolic objects guaranteed the Grand Zombi access to demonic powers.

Blood is associated with death on the battlefield, the slaughter of animals, cycles of fertility, and pagan rituals wherein occultist bath in blood or offer blood up to spirits of power.

But, modern man seems oblivious to the necessity of blood redemption.

The only legal tender Americans understand are worthless FRNs and Citibank Credit Cards. “Money” is the American religion. After all, every dollar boasts it is backed by “the full **faith** and credit” of the U.S. government--a bankrupt corporation at that! To many Americans, FRNs can buy anything, even favors with God. In love with gold-platinum credit cards, BMWs, and dollar bills, the average U.S. citizen hopes to gain power by spending himself into debt, by devoting himself to yoga exercises, and by using psychedelic drugs to engage the spirit world.

In the month of May 2018, Breitbart News reported that people were leaving Illinois in droves because of high taxes. “So, how is the state’s legislature reacting to the tens of thousands of constituents leaving every year over high taxes? Well, legislators are [proposing](#) a massive tax hike, naturally.”

Even in the Christian community, people pray the rosary, offer money in exchange for spiritual favors, and practice oil anointing in hopes of contracting for power in the spirit world. But, why would a spirit be interested in gold or silver or those worthless green FRNs with pictures of dead presidents?

Will Americans wake up and realize that blood is the currency of the spirit world; that only by blood can men escape the penalties of their naked arrogance, shameful lusts, and outbursts of anger?

Gold and silver are of no interest to the Eternal Spirit . . . but blood?

The Great Spirit is attracted to blood . . . the blood of Abel's lamb . . . and the shed blood of Abel . . . and most importantly, the blood of Christ.

Notice that blood speaks to the Almighty; that blood is of utmost interest to the Great Spirit; that blood speaks a message.

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

Hebrews 12:24 "the blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel."

The blood of Abel's lamb cried out for pardon; the blood of Abel cried out for vengeance upon his murderer. The blood of Christ cries out "forgiveness" for trusting sinners.

Which raises the question: How can a transgressor appease the offended Spirit he has neglected all his life? How can a proud miscreant who has plunged into sensuality, fornication, and abominable idolatries be reconciled with his Creator?

The Bible from beginning to the end drills in one truth. Blood has to be brought to the altar.

Blood is the only currency recognized in the spirit world. Blood is the only consideration accepted for a contract. The rituals of religion won't do. Feeling sorry for your wicked deeds can't buy spit. Saying "I'm sorry" to an offended Spirit will get you thrown into hell.

Cain was a farmer. Cain's offered vegetables to God and was rejected. Abel was a shepherd. Abel offered the blood of a lamb and found acceptance (Genesis 4).

From this account we learn there are only two religions in the world--(1) the religion of beans, beets, and broccoli--a religion of works; and (2) the religion of blood redemption. Judaism, Islam, and the pantheistic faiths are based on the belief that one's good deeds commend a man to God; that is, they follow the way of Cain and practice a vegetable religion. Christianity is based on the blood sacrifice of the Son of which all the Levitical sacrifices are a type.

The only tender accepted for ransom is blood . . . and a very special kind of blood--innocent blood, pure blood, sinless blood! Is there such a rare treasure as this? Yes, there is!

In His grace and mercy, the great Spirit offered the blood of His Son as currency for redemption: "knowing that you were ransomed from the corruptible ways inherited from your forefathers, not with worthless things like silver and gold, **but with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or defect" - 1 Peter 1:19.

Therefore, if you are trusting in your miserable money or worthless religious rituals or feeble beliefs that you are not that bad of a person, flee to the cross and lay hold of the horns on the altar. Plead the blood of Christ might be applied as payment for your sins. "Under stand" ("stand

under") the blood of the Lamb and its authority. It is the only currency accepted in the spirit world.

This is our gospel.

90. MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

The world searches for peace. There is even a Nobel Peace Prize. But, the world's peace has its own terms and values -- values that do not include the Law of the LORD God.

The world is all about conquest: about conquest over the environment; about health over disease; about men over women or women over men; about power of one race over another; about power in the market place; about wealth over poverty; about controlling territories, systems, and states; about the government's control over its citizens (See the first horsemen in the Apocalypse).

The world offers peace to men on its terms: ("in this world you shall have tribulation," said Jesus.)

- The state offers us peace if we are compliant with its ten gazillion laws and willingly support money grabbing legislation and theft through taxation.
- The state offers us peace if we accept its abortion mills, welcome homosexuality as a protected lifestyle, and tolerate a government manufacturing money out of thin air.
- The police offer us peace if we obey their commands, sign their tickets, and pay fines for "crimes" *mala prohibitum* in order to increase State revenue.
- The IRS offers us peace if we cooperate with its presumptive tax system, agree to be treated as a government debt slaves, fill out 1040 forms, and give Caesar whatever Caesar demands.
- The courts offer us peace if we will accept their presumptive *in personam* jurisdiction over us, agree to have a corrupt, money-hungry ward of the court lawyer represent us, and submit to their process as they seek to indict, convict, fine, and imprison us.
- The organized church offers us peace as long as we show up, pay up, and shut up.

But, Jesus offers His people His peace — a peace gained by His triumph over Satan, sin, and death—a peace rooted in self-sacrifice and love—a peace that enriches man and sets him free to be God's child—a calm, undisturbed spirit that is at rest in Christ's acceptance before the throne

of God and His accomplishments on behalf of all of those who trust Him—a peace that accepts Christ’s righteousness as God’s free gift to sinful men—a peace that rests in the victory of Another.

We are **not** called to accept the world’s terms for peace for we are at war with the *cosmos* (world) that kills babies, enslaves men, and steals man’s property under color of law (Isaiah 48:22). There is no ground of peace between sheep and wolves; between abortionists and Right to Lifers; between Christians and gender-benders. Twice Jesus had to clarify a truth—the truth that he did not offer any peace to the world, but a sword . . . the sword of judgment, justice, and execution (Matthew 10:34).

To His own, however, He offered them the gift of His peace. And, we are called to enter into his peace and be at rest while we wage war against the principalities and powers of this evil world.

Back in the sixties, I heard John Walden (CO Springs) tell this story.

There once was a King who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists presented their work. The King looked at all the pictures, but there were only two he admired and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror, for peaceful towering mountains were all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, also. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain dropped and in which lightening lit up the sky. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall--not very peaceful at all. But when the King took a second look, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest in perfect peace. Guess which painting the king chose?

His peace is a heart at rest in the perfections of Christ midst the roaring imperfections of our age.

May we enter into His peace today!

91. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST

Is this the missing message that churchmen have lost in our time?

*Acts 17: 6-7 " . . . **these that have turned the world upside down** are come hither also . . . and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, (King) Jesus."*

Faithful Christians examine their own message to see if it conforms to the gospel that "turned the world upside down" in the first century.

When Jesus burst out of the chains of death to escape the winding grave clothes, believing men confessed Christ as Lord of all.

"From the mount of Olives, the place where in dread conflict His garments were rolled in blood, He has mounted in triumph to His throne." ([Charles Spurgeon](#))

Christians have the hope of a resurrection morning because there was a rising again for Him.

In the Book of Acts Jesus emerged as the hope of sinners where He is referred to as "Savior" two times and "Lord" ninety-two times.

Titles like "King" and "Lord" and "Master" invoke His authority.

Because He possesses all authority in heaven and earth, Christians have de jure power to conduct kingdom business here on earth even to the point of resisting hostile government powers (Matthew 28:18-20).

The New Testament assigned the title "Lord" to Jesus 747 times. Clearly, the riveting apostolic preached Jesus as the ascended Sovereign.

In the Old Testament, the name YHWH in Hebrew and LORD in English appears 6,832 times. Sovereignty and authority thunder through the centuries because of His powerful name. Under the title "LORD," He created heaven and earth; as the loving King, He gave the law to Israel, and the prophets obeyed Him. Clearly, the core of the OT gospel centered on the hub, "The LORD reigneth" (Psalm 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1).

The apostle John closed out the canon of Scripture with the trumpet, thundering announcement, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" (Revelation 19:6).

Can you hear the roaring, rumbling, crushing thunder of the LORD's reign?

Will you surrender to it?

In speaking about our Lord's ascension, Charles Spurgeon reminded the Brits that when generals and kings returned from war, they celebrated their victory with a triumphal march through Rome. Riding on the stallions through the streets of the capital, they paraded their naked captives as trophies of war. The inhabitants crowded to the windows, filled the streets, thronged the housetops, and showered acclamations and garlands of flowers upon the conquering hero as he rode along.

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive: you have received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them."

Psalm 47:5, "God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet."

The modern gospel, however, does not proclaim Jesus' thundering authority to split the sprawling cedars of man's pride, but offers "fire insurance" against the terrors of hell and how you can prosper by faith.

The gospel that "turned the world upside down" did not proclaim health and wealth but a chariot riding king with sword in hand, King Jesus (Acts 17:6-17).

The gospel of the kingdom announced the King had entered history to crush man's enemies with the hammer of His holiness: Satan, sin, and death.

Spurgeon put it this way,

"Angels and glorified spirits saluted our returning Champion, and leading captivity captive, He assumed the mediatorial throne amidst universal acclamations: 'Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.'"

This Victor-King defeated death through his death, burial, and resurrection and was seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:30-32).

While men called Jesus the "the Savior" and the "Christ," the gospel that stunned the Mediterranean world proclaimed Jesus as "the Prince of the kings of earth" (Revelation 1:5) greater than Herod and greater than Caesar.

He claimed authority "over all flesh" at the most in opportune time, hours before His death, and then proved it by His resurrection from the fetters of death (John 17:2).

He commissioned his disciples to go into the nations proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom . . . but not before He assured them that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him (Matthew 28:18-20).

Paul taught that to enter the kingdom of God one had to embrace Jesus as Lord ([Roman 10:9](#)); that the whole purpose of His death, burial, and resurrection was that He might be Lord both of the living and the dead ([Romans 14:9](#))

Because He has authority over all men, He calls all men everywhere to repent and bow the knee to His authority ([Acts 17:30-31](#)).

If the winds and sea obey Him (Matthew 8:27), all men must be charged with obedience.

Throughout history human governments have demanded the total allegiance of their 'subjects' at the expense of individual God-given rights, personal liberties, and religious truth.

In the 17th Century, the State taught citizens to believe in the "crown right of kings." The 18th-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) argued that all societies need a religion to hold men together. Because Christianity tended to pull men away from earthly matters, Rousseau advocated a "civil religion" that would create the links necessary for political unity around the state. In modern times, democratic societies returned to pagan forms of Statism as described by Robert Bellah in 1967.

The State media apparatus religiously promotes government as the one holding the golden scepter to rule the world. Political religions compete with religion for the affection of men and seek to occupy the same ethical, psychological and sociological space as a traditional religion. Consequently, government seeks to co-opt existing religious organizations and beliefs -- an example being the modern trend to incorporate churches under IRS 501(c)3 control of the State. Citizens are encouraged to kiss the ring of the finger of some politician in order to achieve the socialist's utopia of equality, prosperity, and democracy.

But, there is no peace without the Prince of Peace!

The gospel that turned the world upside down and conquered Western Civilization did not proclaim government as god, or Caesar as king, or the Roman City State as the hope of the world.

The gospel that turned the world upside down taught "another king, King Jesus."

The Apostolic Declaration that launched the gospel from Jerusalem into the Mediterranean world acted on a commission sealed by Lord's signet ring procured by His ascension to heaven's throne:

"We ought to obey God rather than men" - Acts 5:29

The Historic Battle-Cry of the Christian Church became:

"AND HE HATH ON HIS VESTURE AND ON HIS THIGH, A NAME WRITTEN, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." - Revelation 19:16

Notice how the consciousness of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), refers to Christ as King:

*"Let these and similar answers (if any fuller and fitter answers can be found) be given to their enemies by the redeemed family of the Lord Christ, and by **the pilgrim city of King Christ**" ((Augustine, "City of God").*

Do you want to turn the world right side up? Then kiss the signet ring of King Jesus and claim your rights as a citizen of the kingdom of God.

The gospel gladiators that "turned the world upside down" did not shout "Hail Caesar, we who are about to die salute thee," but that there is another king, King Jesus enthroned in the celestial city.

In 1618 the King James VI attempted force the pattern of worship of the Anglican Church upon the Scottish churches. His son Charles I also pursued this policy in 1625. In 1638, the Scottish Presbyterians rejected this royal usurpation by signing the National Covenant which declared religious independence from the State church. In 1643, they signed the Solemn League and Covenant which pledged their allegiance only to the Crown Rights of Jesus Christ. Thus, they became known as the Scottish Covenanters. Because they believed in unlimited sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead, they opposed the theory of the Divine Right of Kings.

Such dissenting views brought strong opposition from King Charles II in 1662 wherein he outlawed Presbyterianism and declared the Covenants as illegal. The belief that men as British kings ought to bow to the authority of Jesus as King made the Covenanters 'rebels' and traitors to the State in the eyes of the government. Driven from their pulpits, many resorted to field

preaching. Using the force and power of the government, kings sent their sheriffs to hunt the down, arrest, jail, and brutally torture and kill the Scottish protestors. In spite of severe persecution and deprivations, many of these despised so called "rebels" faced the police powers of the State proudly waving their banners which read: "FOR THE WORD OF GOD AND THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS" and "FOR CHRIST'S CROWN AND COVENANT."

In May 1685, a bleeding remnant of 200 Scottish Covenanters at Blackgannoch Moss faced the king's brutal police force loudly proclaiming their fervent declaration of faith: "LET KING JESUS REIGN, AND ALL HIS ENEMIES BE SCATTERED!"

The belief in the sovereignty of the Lord hummed in the hearts of Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists prior to the Revolutionary War.

The last time men seized the truth that there is "no king, but King Jesus" a nation was born (1776)! (A Theological Interpretation of American History" by C. Gregg Singer; "The Light and the Glory" by Peter Marshall and David Manuel)

From the pulpit and town hall came the cries for liberty, but the average colonist blended his cry for liberty with a common loyalty to King George. Though most Crown-appointed governors remained loyal to their king, one wrote to the Board of Trade in England saying: "If you ask an American, who is his master? He will tell you he has none, nor any governor but Jesus Christ." ("The Myth of Separation" by David Barton).

In 1775, John Adams and John Hancock were at the home of Rev. Jonas Clarke, a Lexington pastor and militia leader. On the night of April 18th, Paul Revere made his famous ride to warn these patriots of the approaching Redcoats. The next morning the British were met with by a Christian militia at the Concord Bridge. British Major Pitcairn shouted to the regiment of Minutemen; "Disperse, ye villains, lay down your arms in the name of George the Sovereign King of England." The immediate response of Rev. Jonas Clarke or one of his company was:

"We recognize no Sovereign but God and no King but Jesus."

And, then, there was the shot that was heard around the world.

Later, Patrick Henry penned these words for our instruction:

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!" -- a gospel that emphasized the sovereignty and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, things have changed!

Americans no longer believe in "no king but King Jesus." Rather, their hope has shifted to a government of the people, by the people, and for the politicians . . . a world government of Zionists, feminists, and globalists.

With the statist mindset of modern Americans and their hope in the powers of government, we would be hard pressed to find Christians today that believe and practice there is "no king but King Jesus."

Christians used to stand at attention when they heard the words of the Hallelujah Chorus, "King of kings and Lord of lords." Today, millennials sit on their hind quarters sipping on their can of beer discussing the Green Gospel and how to save the planet from global warming.

Until Christians grasp that King Jesus is on the throne, they will fiddle with politics in order to advance the utopian One World Government -- the key to happiness by internationalists.

Isn't it time for believers to reflect on the authority of Christ and the practical application of what the Scripture means when it announces our Lord as "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS?"

Christians would do well to reclaim their authority and stop applying to the government for 501 c (3) privileges and benefits.

Modern America cannot be reborn until hope shifts away from the City of Man to the City of God, from "Hail Caesar" to "Praise Jesus," from trust in government to trust in God.

*"I set **my king** upon my holy hill of Zion . . . Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. **Serve the LORD** with fear, and rejoice with trembling. **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" ([Psalm 2:6, 10-12](#)).*

*Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth **the Lord Jesus** (acknowledge His authority), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

92. PSALM 2: KISS THE SON ALL YE NATIONS

We live in times of political chaos where madmen steer the helm of government. Against the backdrop of the surf and foam of political strife is the source of peace and prosperity. *Before us is the reason for all political conflict in the world today (Rebellion Against God's Law-order), and the solution to every political problem in seed form (Surrender to Christ as the King of kings by State officials).*

The Psalmists Speaks

^{KJV} **Psalm 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?**

The word “why” is an interrogatory that can be translated “how” or “what” or “how much.” It is a question asked for our benefit. The word “heathen” should be translated “nations.” The word “go’em” is translated “people” and “nations” in Genesis 10:5. In Jewry, the term *goy* is a derogatory term for non-Jews, but that is not the case here. Jews are part of the rebellion.

The verb “rage” (*raqash*) is only used here, and it means to be in “tumult” or “commotion.” The psalmist is asking, “Why are the nations always in a furor, a frenzy, a constant state of irritation, full of madness and hostility? The word “imagine” is the imperfect Hebrew verb “*hagah*.” It is translated “roar” or “moan” or “growl” in Isaiah 31:4 of a lion roaring over its prey. It is translated “plot” in the ESV and “meditate” in Psalm 1:2. The word “vain” is the Hebrew verb “*reek*,” used adverbially. It is translated “armed” in the KJV and “led forth” in the ESV in Genesis 14:14. It is translated “the seven empty ears” blasted with east wind which is a reference to the seven years of famine in Genesis 41:27; and, “emptied their sack” in Genesis 42:35. The idea here is of kings “emptying theirs nets” of destruction and mercilessly killing people. We need only look at the madness of the Bolsheviks, Lenin, Stalin and others to grasp the harvest of this rage against God.

Before us is the question of the ages. Why can't nations live in peace? Why are they always at war, always in an uproar, always existing in the surf and foam of the sea of conflict? As we listen to the news, it seems that there is always a regional dispute, a political debate, an infringement, a group of rebels protesting some perceived inequity, a nation in political chaos ravaged by civil war. Some nation somewhere is “emptying his net” aggressively shelling another country for power and wealth and revenge, or defending itself against rocket fire with weapons of mass destruction.

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

The kings have set themselves against the LORD. The name “LORD” is the tetragrammaton and clearly refers to God’s sovereignty and authority. The title “anointed” is the Hebrew name for Messiah, *mashiyach*, meaning “anointed”—a reference to Christ, the Son of God.

Several facts about the verb “set” needs to be noticed. First, the verb “set” (*tithyetsebu*) is a Hebrew Hithpael, reflexive verb; that is, the kings of the earth are stirring themselves up. The hostility clearly resides in the kings who are constantly declaring war against the LORD God; that is, they want to be gods among men and the only sovereigns on earth. Secondly, the verb “set” is in the emphatic position in the sentence and clearly emphasizes the intense, independent, rebellious nature of kings. The preposition “against” is properly translated, but could also be worded “upon” or “over” the LORD; that is, the kings of the earth have stationed themselves as masters over men, and they claim sovereignty over matters pertaining to the LORD God. The rulers of the earth do not recognize the authority of God and His Law-word over them. They see themselves as the only sovereign.

When Chief Justice Roy Moore placed the Ten Commandments in the corridor of the Alabama courthouse and explained that it represented the need of all Judges to surrender to the authority of the LORD God and His Law-word, the federal judge would have nothing to do with it. The Federal Court declared that, “the state may not acknowledge the sovereignty of the Judeo-Christian God” [morallaw.org].

Before us is a continuation of the question: “*Why have the kings of the earth set themselves up as lords and masters in opposition to the sovereignty of God and His anointed King, the Lord Jesus Christ?*”

The Rulers of the Earth Speak**3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.**

Now the kings speak to one another. The Hebrew Piel, plural verb “let us break” is cohortive in form and meaning . . . and it is in the emphatic position. The Piel verb communicates intense determination to break from Puritan Christianity. Being in the emphatic position this verb clearly communicates the excessive vigor and profound madness of political leaders united in a new world order that incites rebellion against the Triune God and His law-order.

The term “their bands” is a feminine plural, a reference to the Trinity. “Their” would be a reference to the “us” of Genesis 1:26-28. The words “bands” and “cords” refer to chains or ropes that tether animals. These terms designate the Claim the Creator-God has on all the people of the

earth. They are used metaphorically of the sovereignty of the LORD God and the absolute binding authority of His law over mankind.

The new world order encourages rebellion against the authority of Christ and His Law-word, and is hell-bent on bringing in a new world order to build the utopia of kings—wealth, power, and control of man’s destiny.

Today, there are no kings who have taken an oath to the LORD God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to uphold His law and to honor Christ save one—the Queen of England. But, she has so violated her oath, she committed treason against God and the British people. At best, kings take oaths to uphold the laws of man—which by the way, are almost always hostile to God’s law-order.

Heaven’s Reaction to the Rebellion

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

To an informed Christian the hostility of congressmen and our nation’s leaders is like a burr under our saddle. We are constantly irritated and agitated by the insanity of our political leaders. Rightly so. Thus, we pray, “Hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come;”

How does God respond to the psychotic, sociopathic madness of kings? Well, He certainly isn’t threatened by any . . . or all of them! “He laughs!” The term “laugh” (*shachaq*) is translated “to make sport of” in Judges 16:25. It is a term of contempt. The word “derision” (*la-ag*) means “to mock” and is translated “laughed thee to scorn” in 2 Kings 19:21. The temporal power of weak, proud rulers is no threat to the omnipotent power of the eternal God.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

What is the future of the rebel kings? He has a message for them. The verbs “speak” (Piel) and “vex” (Piel) in Hebrew poetry are complementary terms. Both clearly state intense energetic action. The word “vex” is translated “troubled” (Genesis 45:3), “dismayed” (Exodus 15:15) and “terrified” (ESV 1 Samuel” 28:21). God is not some sweet, indulgent passive Santa Claus type figure. Before us in the image of deliberate, controlled, intense action of an angry God.

The word “wrath” and “sore displeasure” are also complementary terms. The Hebrew word for “wrath” is “nostril” (*aph*); that is, when a man feels wronged, his nostrils flare. The Hebrew word for “sore displeasure” means “heat” or “burning anger.” The imagery before us is that of an angry dragon with flared nostrils blasting balls of fire upon his adversaries. The sudden, stroke illness, stroke, and death of Lenin (1924) after his order (1922) to starve five million Russian peasants comes to mind.

To put it bluntly, God is not happy with the nations. Today, there is no government committed to His law-order. Consequently, He is opposed to the proud, humanistic states. It is not his will that any of them succeed. All will fail. He will vex them in His wrath.

The Father Speaks

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

The Father speaks. “I have set” is the Hebrew Qal perfect verb *nacah* which means “to pour out.” The imagery before us is that of a metallurgist heating iron ore in a blast furnace at a smelting plant to pour hot iron into a mold to make steel. The Father emphatically states that He has His king, and He has installed him permanently on His holy hill.

The “holy hill” is a reference to the Heavenly Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the assembly of the saints, the heavenly Jerusalem of which carnal Jerusalem was a type.

This is a decree “written in stone” sort of speak! It is an iron-clad, perpetual, indisputable fact. In contrast to antlers that fall off every season among deer and elk, are permanent horns of power like that of a ram. In contrast to the changing winds and the sands of time are the eternal shores; in contrast to the fading grass on the prairie are the mighty rocks and boulders of the earth; in contrast to the fragile tents of man are the pyramids of Almighty God. In contrast to fragile, weak, temporal rulers is God’s eternal, immutable, anointed King. In contrast to the weak, flawed egotists that arise to power out of the sea of politics to ride the wave of temporal power to the sand castles of nations is God’s chosen King, the Lord Jesus Christ, established forever on God’s holy, eternal mountain. God rules, not man!

Before us is the SOLUTION to all political disputes—recognition of and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the Nations. Oh, that the kings of the earth were humbly submitted to the authority of Christ, under oath to obey His Law-word. How different the evening news!

The Son Speaks

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

The Son speaks. A public notice is given. The term “decree” refers to a resolve, order, or statute. The first usage of the word “decree” (*choq*) is in reference to land given to the priests by Pharaoh which Joseph, Vice-regent of Egypt, was not permitted to seize or sell (Genesis 47:22); that is, Pharaoh’s decree was set in stone. His decree was absolute and permanent. It is like an executive order, but more firm. Thus, God’s decree to the Son is absolute, permanent, forever, immutable, and unchangeable.

The decree is one of relationship. The Son is very God of God, eternal, from the beginning. But, at a point in time, if we dare use the term “time,” the Father declared His relationship to the Second Person of the Triune God as that of a father to a son. He is now “The Son.” The term “begotten” does not refer to an actual birth, but the genesis of a legal relationship. In the movie “Ben Hur,” Ben Hur wins the affection of a Roman Senator, receives his freedom, and is declared a son. He existed before the declaration. The decree did not initiate his existence; only a new status. Likewise, between the Father and the Son. The Second Person of the Triune God was declared a Son.

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.

Favored by the Father, the Son is granted special favors. All He has to do is ask, and the nations are His. This is the Spirit’s way of informing us that Christ claims jurisdiction over all men and their institutions. Both the right and power to rule the nations belong to Christ: “Who is the head of all rule and authority” (Colossians 2:10). But, Christ has done more than ask. He has purchased the nations with His own blood, the currency of the spirit world. The iron scepter is in nail pierced hands. The nations are as fragile as pottery. The One who made a whip and cleansed the temple will use His rod of iron to smash the nations. Rebels who will not bow the knee will be broken into hundreds of pieces.

The Spirit Speaks

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

The Spirit of God gives sweet counsel to the rulers of the earth. The object of instruction are kings, presidents, parliaments, public officials in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. They are exhorted to be wise and receive the following instruction. Unfortunately, however, the nations seem to be in the hands of fools and madmen.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

The word “serve” means “to work” or “to labor” or “to obey.” The kings of the earth are exhorted to serve the LORD; that is, to obey His Law-word. The command “rejoice” refers to voluntary service. Holy fear must mix with joy and the privilege of serving the LORD God. Governments are in place to serve the interest of Heaven and the law of the LORD God; to protect human rights and freedom; and, to punish those who infringe on the rights of others.

The phrases “with fear” and “with trembling” is a call to careful and precise obedience to His commands and purpose (Deuteronomy 5:29; 6:2, 13, 24; 8:6; 10:12, 20; 13:4; 17:19; 19:20).

The Spirit is calling for allegiance to the Word of God, not allegiance to a political party or the new world order or to the U.S. Constitution. Oh, what a different place the world would be if we had Christian leaders committed to the will of God and served His purposes to the best of their knowledge and ability. Today, however, it seems we have madmen ruling nations who are hell bent on serving their own lust or Marxist program or the agenda of the new Zionist world order to mention a few.

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.

“Kiss” refers to the ancient tradition of subjects kissing the ring or scepter of a king; that is, of demonstrating devotion and loyalty to the crown. Kings take no pleasure in rebels. To arouse the wrath of a king is to perish like Haman before Xerxes. After the Earl of Essex “half” draw his sword against Queen Elizabeth, she determined to have him executed.

All the kings of the earth all called to “kiss the Son:”

Kiss Him as the Son of God, the historical Christ who appeared in Bethlehem.

- Kiss Him as the Creator for “by Him all things are Created.”
- Kiss Him as the King of the rulers of the earth.
- Kiss Him as the only Lawgiver, King, Priest, and Prophet.
- Kiss Him as the Savior King Who gave His life to save His people from their sins.
- Kiss Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
- Kiss Him as the Gateway to God.
- Kiss Him as the Mediator between Heaven and Earth.
- Kiss Him as the Lamb of God, the Sin-bearer.
- Kiss Him as the Way of Salvation.
- Kiss Him as the True Israel of God, the fulfillment of all OT promises.
- Kiss Him as the Head of the Church.
- Kiss Him as the risen, ascended Savior and Lord sitting at the Right hand of God.
- Kiss the Son lest He be angry you perish in the way.
- Kiss the Son that you may be truly blessed of God with eternal life and enter His kingdom.

Kiss the Son is equivalent to invitation terms like “receive Christ as Lord and Savior,” “believe,” “repent,” “bow the knee to Christ,” and “Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raise him from the dead” (Romans 10:9). The psalmist is telling us to “look to Christ” and be saved. To reject Christ is to perish, for “whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:18).

The term “blessing” refers to salvation. To “kiss the Son” is to be reconciled to God and to possess eternal life and the blessings of the age to come.

A blessing is promised to rulers and all those who put their trust in him. Trust here is more than an occasional glance toward heaven, but a genuine commitment to trust and obey. “In God we Trust,” is our nation’s motto. Oh, that it would be more than mere words. Oh, that we might acknowledge there is only one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

The schism between the United States and Russia or between Hamas and Israel are the result of the nations rejecting God’s Law-order. The solution between the United States and Russia and between Gaza and Israel is for all parties to “kiss the Son.” There is peace at the cross. If Jews and Gentiles can find peace at the cross, so can Arabs and Jews, Americans and Russians.

Before us is the reason for all political conflict in the world today, and the solution to every political problem known to man in seed form. The problems are not political, but spiritual; likewise, the solution is not political diplomacy or war, but confession of and surrender to the Son. Kiss the Son and be reconciled to God.

93. JESUS IS GONE BUT THIS IS GOOD

Jesus is gone, but this is good!

*John 16: 5-7 But now **I go my way to him** that sent me But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; **It is expedient for you that I go away**: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

Our blessed Lord is not here. He is no longer with us. His voice is silent. His seat at the table is empty. The multitudes no longer hear wisdom dripping like honey from His lips. The sick no longer feel his comforting touch. He is gone!

From the Mount of Olives where His garments were soaked in blood, He ascended into the clouds, out of sight, to be crowned with glory and to sit on His throne over the River of Life as Lord of All. He is gone!

And, this is good!

The Lord announced to His bewildered disciples at the Last Supper that He was going to depart . . . and a gloomy *sorrow* (lupe) filled their frightened hearts ([16:6](#)). Like an archer's arrow, intense grief pierced the souls of His men to burst their bubble of hope.

From the Greek term “sorrow” we get the medical term “lupis” — that miserable affliction of fatigue, joint pain, and butterfly rashes on cheeks of the body.

The Lord's announcement of His departure sucked all the joy out of the Passover banquet, but it was for their good . . . so they would not “be offended” ([16:1](#)).

The word “offended” (skandiliz0) does not refer to upsetting one's emotions, but to a stumbling block, trap, or net designed to ensnare. He spoke this stinging truth so they would not stumble after His bloody battle at the cross or following His slow rising from the earth into the clouds on the day of ascension.

Though it is good that He is gone, there are many reasons we could list why it would be better to have our Lord here on earth with us in this modern age.

When He was with the disciples, problems seemed to disappear. Storms ceased. Diseases healed. Demons departed. Dead raised. Temptations averted. Trials made easy. With Jesus near, the sheep lay down safely. With Jesus near, every affliction had a solution.

Surely, if He were here today a thousand synagogues would rejoice to see Him open the Scriptures, ten thousand chapels would beg the privilege of His presence. There are men among us who would fall prostrate on the pavement in worship and women who would kiss his feet, break out the ointment, and lavish Him with the most expensive lotions money could buy.

But, instead of gazing up into heaven with wonder, let us investigate the text.

In our Scripture above, our Lord said it was “expedient” that He go away.

The word “expedient” comes from the Greek word *sumphero* which is translated “profitable” in Matthew 5:29-30; “better” in Matthew 18:6; and “good” in Matthew 19:10; and, “expedient” in John 11:50 and 16:7.

Forty days after He crushed the dragon’s head at Golgotha and His blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, our Lord raised His blessed hands over His followers, enriched them with His final counsels, and was lifted up above the clouds to the Mountains of Myrrh above the glassy sea to be seated on that royal throne surrounded by millions of applauding angels beside His Heavenly Father.

No doubt the small flock trembled with uncertainty and were overcome with personal interests. Their Lord and Savior was gone! Which one of the disciples was thinking it is good for us that our Shepherd-King is gone?

Why is it better that Jesus is gone from us?

(1) His departure was necessary so the Comforter would dwell within them: “for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

The appellation “Comforter” comes from the Greek word *paraclete* which means *counselor, legal assistant, advocate, comforter, proctor, mentor, and intervenor equivalent to a common law barrister.*

Think about what our Lord was saying! ***The presence of the invisible Spirit was more valuable to them than the bodily presence of the Savior!***

While He was with them, the disciples had difficulty understanding the most fundamental truths: His kingdom, the parables, the cross, the church, the new Israel, salvation, law and grace, the evil

hearts of the Jewish lawyers, the differences between Judaism and Christianity, Jesus washing their feet, and their purpose in the new dispensation.

But, once the Spirit took up residence in the heart of these men, the lights came on, night turned to day, white triumphed over black, beauty appeared, ugly vanished, Scripture came alive, and the jigsaw puzzle of truth came together.

*Ephesians 3:5 Which in other ages was **not made known** unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*

1 John 2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

The disciples sat under the greatest, wisest teacher the world has ever known; *yet, they did not understand until they were anointed with the Holy Spirit.*

(2) His departure was necessary so all believers could know and feel the presence of God with them.

While our Lord was on earth, He could be bodily present in only one place at one time.

In order to execute the grand plan of growing the redeemed from 500 into millions it was necessary to have some Agent who could be in all places at the same time to apply the work of Christ to all people on the face of the earth. The Spirit is that Agent.

Imagine what it would be like to have only Jesus in bodily form in only one place on earth. The whole world would be rushing to hear one word from his lips . . . a literal impossibility.

But, now that Jesus is gone, and the Holy Spirit has come, all the redeemed, where ever they are, can fellowship with the Father.

(3) His departure was necessary so the Holy Spirit could begin His essential ministry in the great plan of redemption.

Each person of the Trinity has a part to perform in the work of redemption.

It was not the work of the Spirit to provide atonement for sins, nor is it the work of the Savior to apply it to each believing sinner. Once Jesus performed His part in redemption, the Holy Spirit could begin His part in drawing sinners to Christ, regenerating souls, and indwelling hearts.

It was not the work of the Savior to indwell men nor is it possible for Him as a Divine Person to live in the hearts of men. He is not a disembodied spirit. He is seated at the right hand of God in bodily form. Men are not saved by inviting Jesus into their hearts, they are saved by believing in

Him and His accomplishments at Calvary. The Spirit of God frees men and enables them to believe in Christ.

(4) His departure was necessary so the Spirit could take up residence within men.

While Jesus was with His disciples, He was not in them. Among them, Yes; in them, No. Now that He is gone, the Holy Spirit performs His work of indwelling men making the believing heart an individual temple of God.

1 Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

Furthermore, not only are individual Christians called a temple of God, but when Christians assemble to gather to fulfill the duties of Christians in [Acts 2:42](#) they become a living temple metropolis.

Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

(5) His departure was necessary so every disciple, then and now, could have power to fulfill the Great Commission. ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)).

With the work of atonement complete, the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world signaled the success of gospel proclamation. Jesus had to go away in order that the Spirit might begin his ministry of empowering disciples to communicate the Gospel of Salvation to a lost and dying world.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Each and every believer is christened with gifts to help build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:7-13).

(6) His departure was necessary for holiness.

The Comforter is called the “Holy Ghost.”

These men struggled with greed and lust like all men. Two of them were called “sons of thunder.” Many of the Jews turned back from following because they stumbled over our Lord’s teaching about “eating his flesh” and “drinking his blood” (John 6). Judas betrayed our Lord for

twenty pieces of silver; Peter buckled under the pressure of accusation by a young maid. All His disciples abandoned Him at the cross except John.

But, when the Comforter took residence among the disciples the whole community took on the character of holiness.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

*1 Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, **an holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

But, how do men change?

No, it is not just a matter of choices, introspection, healing your inner child, or struggling to be the best you can be.

People are not changed by going to spiritual counselors trained in Eastern mysticism who take them on inner archaeological journeys to discover their inner wounds and blame points. This is all Eastern psychobabble nonsense.

Each believer is being transformed from the image of Adam to the image of Christ by the work of the Spirit when He looks away from self to Christ as His joy and hope; when he looks away from his snake-bite wounds to the brass Serpent lifted up on the cross.

*2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face **beholding** as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as **by the Spirit of the Lord**.*

(7) His departure was necessary to perfect our joy!

While our Lord's time on this earth among us brings us great joy, we must remember that for Him His descent to earth was filled with shame and humiliation, pain and loneliness; that His ascension was filled with glory, honor, and unspeakable joy.

In proportion, thereof, our joy ought to be that His shame was followed up with glory, that His pain disappeared under the thunderclaps of praise He received upon His return to Heaven, that He left this planet of death to live forever in the universe of eternal life.

Since the shepherds sang at his descent to earth, let the hearts of all good "Christian men rejoice, with heart and soul and voice" at His ascent to heaven. Having entered the battle to face the

trinity of evil alone, He emerged God's Victor over Satan, sin, and death. Once draped in bloody grave clothes, a royal ephod and golden crown adorn Heaven's Champion. Our hate for sin and love of justice compels us to rejoice in His joy. Whatever delights the Son, delights all of God's children.

*Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, **through the power of the Holy Ghost.***

Jesus is gone.

But, it is good that He is gone. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit would not be here to perform His important work of applying the benefits of redemption to the hearts of men.

94. THE MEANING OF THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The older I become, the more interested I am in politics. Sometimes, I wish I had a representative in the White House that would listen to my concerns and act on them. Likewise, I share this same concern before the High Court of the Universe, don't you?

It is significant that the gospel account begins with the birth of Christ and ends with the ascension of Christ at the right hand of God. Without understanding the ascension and its significance, something will be missing in our confidence and service to Christ. A proper appreciation for Christ's present risen life relieves our fears and roots our confidence in Sovereignty.

Acts 1:9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight (^{NAS}).

The ascension took place in the daytime near Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives (Luke 24:50). Jesus gave his final address and then He was carried up into a cloud. The word "taken up" comes from "epairo" (evph,rqh) and in Hellenistic Greek means to "hoist the sail" (Acts 27:40). The ascension took place on or around May 14th, 34 A.D. (40 days after the crucifixion/resurrection, April 3, 33 A.D.) (Acts 1:3).

Some have argued that Christ ascended with his blood to the Father after his death. However, scholarship has demonstrated this is not so. The statement in John 20:17, "I have not yet ascended" is a comforting prediction. He told Mary that He would ascend at some unknown time in the future, but at the time He was speaking to her, he had not yet ascended.

The ascension was a symbolic act. Jesus could have been taken to the Father in a number of honoring ways. The ascension at Bethany was a symbolic act made intelligible to the disciples that Christ was going to His Father. It represented the acceptance of the man Jesus by the Father to the right hand of God (Acts 2:34-36). The reason for his ascension is not to present the blood on the Mercy Seat in Heaven. The cross was the *mercy seat* in full view of the Father.

The ascension was designed to persuade. Jesus appeared to the disciples on numerous occasions over a forty day period. The forty days was designed to re-assure the disciples of the truth of His resurrection as well as wean the disciples from a dependence on his physical presence. The ascension was a message designed to convince the disciples that they need not expect Him again,

and that they should no longer be kept in suspense in regards to another earthly post-resurrection appearance.

The ascension marked the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. It was the final act, the drop of the curtain, the final note in the drama of the divine visitation. His unique personality demanded an exit appropriate for the regal Son. His unique entrance into life culminated in a grand exit. His humble work on the cross was finished. He ascended to be crowned with glorious honor as the Lord Christ. His disappearance was an eyewitness, historical event that could be intelligently explained to a wondering world.

The ascension was His vindication that He came from God, and was going to God (John 8:42). Christ taught that His Father sent him on a mission to earth (John 5:30, 36). The ascension was proof that His mission was complete and that he had served honorably.

The ascension was His exaltation to glory. In coming to earth, Christ humbled himself to become a man. His ascension was his staircase to glory, fame, honor, and eternal dominion. His pre-existent glory was restored, and therefore, He was adorned with indescribable glory (Philippians 2:5-12; Revelation 1). However, the ascension was more than a return to glory and deity. It was a theanthropic glorification. His ascension meant that Christ the man, the new federal head of God's new creation, the last Adam, the saint's Representative was glorified in heaven guaranteeing ultimate glorification with Him (Romans 8:29, 30).

The ascension was the beginning of a new ministry. Christ said it was good (sumferw, sumphero) for Him to go away (John 16:7) so the Holy Spirit could be given to men. The glorified Christ on the throne began a new work of cleansing and sanctifying His church (Ephesians 5:25ff). The agent of this work of beautification is the Holy Spirit.

The ascension was His coronation as Messiah. He entered his ministry *Messiah designatus*, but after the ascension, He became the inaugurated crowned Prince. Having purchased men with his blood, He earned the right to be the Christ and Lord of God's new creation (1 Corinthians 5:17; 15:47). After the ascension, he would be addressed as:

- "the Lord Jesus Christ" (81x in the epistles)
- "Christ the Lord" (Acts 2:36)
- "Christ Jesus" (58 X)
- "Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33, used 26x in the epistles)
- "Only Potentate" (1 Timothy 6:15)
- "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15)
- "Great High Priest" (Hebrews 4:14)
- "Ruler of the Kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5)
- "the Judge of His people" (Hebrews 10:30; 2 Timothy 4:8)

- “Head of the church” (Ephesians 1:19-22)

His ascension marked the beginning of His Kingly Reign: Christ is presented as one sitting on the right hand of God (Mark 16:19). This is metaphorical language, which presents to us a Christ, not at rest, but One who is endued with power and authority to bring history into submission to the divine will. There is no sphere, no realm, no kingdom, and no household where Christ does not have jurisdiction. All men are commanded to repent and obey Him (Act 17:30).

- “All authority was given” to Him (Matthew 28:13).
- “Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” (Ephesians 1:21).
- “Righteous and true are thy ways, Thou King of the Nations” (Revelation 15:3).
- “With angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him . . .” (1 Peter 3:22).
- “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power” (Daniel 7:14).
- “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Corinthians 15:24).

His Lordship not only extends to individual Christians, but to all men and their institutions. He is Lord of the individual, Lord of the family, Lord of the church, and He is Lord of the nations. The only question is “**Will men acknowledge Him as such?**”

95. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HIGH PRIESTLY MINISTRY

*Hebrews 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become **a merciful and faithful high priest** in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

THE MEANING OF BEING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

- Exodus 15:6, 12 The right hand appears to be a symbol of power and might.
- Deuteronomy 33:2 The right hand is a symbol of power and authority.
- Psalm 16:11 The right hand is the source of spiritual pleasures.
- Psalm 17:7 The right hand is a place of refuge.
- Psalm 20:6 The right hand is a source of power.
- Psalm 21:8 The right hand is a source of knowledge and power.
- Psalm 44:3 The right hand is a source of deliverance.
- Psalm 45:9 The right hand is a source of knowledge.
- Psalm 45:9 The right hand is a privileged place.
- Psalm 48:10 The right hand is a source of righteousness.
- Psalm 63:8 The right hand a source of strength for the believer.
- Psalm 80:15 The right hand is the cause of Israel's existence.
- Psalm 89:13 The right hand is full of might and above all.
- Psalm 89:42 The right hand means authority over others.
- Psalm 98:1 The right hand the source of skill and victory.
- Psalm 109:6 What is at the right hand is critical for success.
- Psalm 109:31 He can stand at the right hand of the needy to give strength.
- Psalm 110:1 Adonai is invited to sit at God's right hand.
- Psalm 110:5 Because Adonai is exalted, kings shall be crushed.
- Psalm 121:5 What is at the right hand is critical; the Lord is a shade.
- Psalm 139:10 The psalmist expresses faith that God's right hand will lead.
- Psalm 144:8 It is bad to have falsehood at thy right hand.
- Zechariah 3:1 Satan can be at one's right hand.
- Matthew 5:30 The right hand can be source of evil.
- Matthew 26:64 Jesus predicts He will be at God's right hand.
- Acts 2:25 A quote: David sees the Lord at his right hand.

NT PASSAGES ON THE HIS PRESENT RISEN LIFE (PRL)

- Acts 2:33 His PRL means exaltation to the right hand of God.
- Acts 2:33 From His PRL He sends the Holy Spirit
- Acts 5:31 He grants repentance to Israel and forgives sins.
- Acts 7:35 He stands at attention, as Stephen is martyred.
- Romans 5:10 We are saved by His PRL.
- Romans 8:34 He is PRL defends us against charges of condemnation
- Ephesians 1:19 From His exalted position, he sends power.
- Ephesians 1:20 All authority is under his feet.
- Ephesians 2:5 We are raised with Him and represented by Him.
- Ephesians 3:12ff He is at work among His people dispensing power.
- Colossians 2:9, 10 Fullness is connected to His PRL.
- Colossians 3:1 He is at the right hand of God.
- Philippians 1:12 He is in an exalted position.
- 1 Timothy 6:15 Jesus/God is called the only sovereign, King of kings.
- Hebrews 1:13 An OT quote: Enemies are being defeated during His PRL.
- Hebrews 8:1 He performs priestly duties at the right hand of God.
- Hebrews 10:12 He sat down at the right hand of God.
- Hebrews 12:2 He sat down at the right hand of God.
- 1 Peter 3:22 All powers are subject to Him.
- Revelation 1-3 He walks in the midst of His people judging and rewarding.
- Revelation 5:7 He holds the scroll while on the right hand of God.
- Revelation 19:11 He wages war on behalf of the saints.
- Revelation 19:16 Jesus appears to help His saints as King of kings.

INSIGHTS FROM HEBREWS

Two branches of authority culminate in the ascension of Christ: the authority of a king, and the authority of a priest. No king in Israel was permitted to be a priest and those who assumed the role were stricken with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:19); Likewise, no priest was permitted to administrate the civic affairs of the nation except as a temporary intervener as in the case of Samuel (1 Samuel 15). However, in Christ we have the fulfillment of the Melchizedek Model: the administration of a King and Priest.

HIS QUALIFICATIONS

Every man longs for a contingency that understands his needs, and that will represent his cause before the Almighty.

His Great Training

For it became him... in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10).

His Great Attitude

He is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:11).

His Great Identification with the human race

... in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same (Hebrews 2:15).

His Great Appointment

He is an appointed High Priest (Hebrews 2:17).

His Great Service to Humanity

He is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:18).

His Great Accomplishments

- He neutralized the Devil's power (Hebrews 2:14).
- He freed humanity from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15).
- He helped Abraham's seed (Hebrews 2:16).
- He made a propitiation for man's sins (Hebrews 2:17).
- His Great Character
- He is merciful (Hebrews 2:17).
- He is faithful Hebrews (Hebrews 3:2).
- He is sympathetic (Hebrews 3:15).

His Divine Authority

A man could not become a priest by popular vote, by usurpation of the office, or by application. He had to be appointed by God. Christ is priest by Divine appointment (Hebrews 3:1; 5:1).

HIS CAPABILITIES

He is able to Save

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to save them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:18).

The word “succour” or “save” is the Greek word “boathasa” (bohqh/sa) which means “to help” or “to cry.” From His position in heaven, He is able to come to the aid of one trapped in the net of temptation.

Paul speaks of Phebe as a “succourer” (prostates) of many. The feminine form of this word denotes a “protectress.” It is a word of dignity and respect. It was a title given to important citizens in the city of Athens who had the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of resident aliens who were without civic rights. Since men are aliens to holiness, Jesus is our helper before the holy throne of heaven (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, 1966, Vol IV. Set-Z, p. 88).

Able to help, Paul prays that our eyes might be opened and that we might know the greatness of his power toward us who believe (Ephesians 1:18, 19).

A story is told about Amintas, a Greek soldier who was to be tried for treason. When the verdict was guilty and he was ready to be sentenced, his brother, who lost an arm in battle, appeared in court and said, “Amintas is guilty, but for Aeschylus sake, he shall go free.” Jesus is our advocate who represents us in the High Court.

He is able to sympathize

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The word “touched with the feelings” comes from *sumposion* (sumpaqh/sai) denoting “to drink together,” hence a “drinking party.” The idea is that Christ can sit down with us and identify with our feelings. Hence, we get the word “sympathy.” The word infirmity is “*astheneia*” (avsqenei,aij) and it means “lack of strength (a, negative; and sthenos, strength) (Vines, Vol. II: “impotent,” p. 252).

Christ sympathizes and understands our infirmities. Because He gloriously exhausted his limitations in temptation, he is able to help believers in times of suffering. However, He does not empathize or condone sin. Sin is not forgivable. Specific sins, however, can be pardoned. Sin is always condemned and there is never a good reason to commit a particular sin. As our Advocate, He is able to strengthen us to resist sin and restore us when we do sin.

He is able to save to the uttermost

Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save (sw, |zein) them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The idea here is that Christ is able to bring to completion the salvation of those who draw near to God. The word “uttermost” (pantele.j) means “completely” or “utterly.” He is able to present believers without fault (Hebrews 8:8; 1 Corinthians 1:8) before God. There is no sin for which he cannot deliver and there is no problem for which He does not have a solution.

HIS SUPPLICATION

Not supplication, but advocacy: The word *parakleton* (para,klhton) suggest the capacity to intervene. The term was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, an advocate who spoke on behalf of the charged (1 John 2:1). The idea here is not that Jesus is in heaven agonizing and pleading our case before a reluctant God, but One whose position before the throne of God claims the rights of our inheritance (Romans 8:33-34).

Not pleading, but presence: Jesus priestly ministry is not vocal. Rather it is His representative presence that assures us that we are accepted. The High Priest in Israel did not intercede with words on the Day of Atonement. Silently, he entered the Presence with blood. It is the blood that speaks. Christ’s presence at the throne assures us of salvation to the uttermost.

Not good, but best: God did not send an angel to represent us, but His Son. God did not send an inferior to help us, but His superior Son.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

When Elisha heard the news about the death of the prophet’s son, he sent his servant and his staff. The sorrowing mother would not settle for anything less but the presence of the man of God. When the issue is life and death, a delegate won’t do. If our sins could be purged by sending an angel, God would have done so. Not angels, but the Son of God advocates our case in heaven (2 Kings 4:29).

Not temporal, but perpetual: His representation is not for a moment in time, but for eternity.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

We would not live for a single day unless He lives continually. Because He has life within himself, His life is a guarantee that we will live forever.

Prevailing prayer, not perfect prayers: Another ministry of Christ is that he receives our prayers. But our prayers are imperfect. How can they be received before a perfect God? Our precious Priest hears our prayers and mingles them with the incense of His presence before the Father.

When Manoah, the father of Samson, offered a young goat to the Lord, the Angel of the Lord (Jesus Christ) who spoke to him ascended in the flame (Judges 13:19ff). The inferior offering was accepted because Christ, the Angel of the Lord, ascended with the offering. Our prayers prevail, not because they are perfect, but because Christ is perfect and mingles them with his own wishes. It is His wonderful presence before the throne on our behalf that gives us confidence that our prayers prevail.

96. CHRIST AS MEDIATOR

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

In modern times the media is beating the drum that all religions are equal and that choosing a religion is no different than choosing between #5 Happy Meal at McDonalds or a Go-Go Burger special at Big Bob's BBQ.

Furthermore, the media's perspective, if not outright belief, is that the State is means of blessing to mankind. With a little tweaking, the State can be the source of all prosperity.

But this is not the teaching of Scripture. The text tells us there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. The way to Heaven is narrow. So much so no man can find God apart from His Son who is called "one mediator" in our text. Let us consider the implications of this verse.

Christ is a Mediator. The word "mediator" comes from the Greek word "mesos" which means middle man, arbitrator, negotiator, or advocate. It refers to One who stands between to exchange decrees and obligations. Christ is the bridge in the canyon between God and man.

Christ is the only mediator. The adjective "one" (eis) is used twice in this Scripture and both are in the emphatic position narrowing the existence of God to the Christian God and the concept of a mediator to Christ alone.

Furthermore, Christ is uniquely qualified to be the only Mediator between God and man. Christians have believed since the earliest times Jesus Christ had two distinct natures in union but "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation;" that is, He is the God man having both the nature of God and the nature of man. This being so, he is properly qualified as the "Mediator" between God and man.

Christ mediates the blessings of God to men. In the Sinaitic Covenant, God promised to bless Israel if they obeyed Him, He would bless the nation. Further, He pronounced a curse on disobedience (Leviticus 26). They disobeyed . . . and they curses fell upon them. How can a holy God that keeps His promises do anything but judge disobedient sinners? How can God bless sinful man?

The answer is in Christ. When Simeon saw Jesus as the new born, he declared, “My eyes have seen Thy Salvation.” Salvation is in a person, not the State. He is *God’s Representative* (Mediator). Because He obeyed God, He received the covenant blessings that disobedient Israel could not obtain. As God’s representative and because of obedience to the God’s Law-order, He became the locus of covenant blessings promised to Israel. By accepting Christ and surrendering to mediation, people can enter His kingdom and enjoy the blessings that He obtained from the Father.

“On earth peace, good will toward men” is offered through Christ, not the State. Modern man, however, seeks to bring peace on earth and good will to men by acts of the state and enactments of law, not by Jesus Christ.

Christ also mediates the concerns of men to God. In the Biblical view, man is a creature and is by nature distinct from God. Moreover, man was a sinner. God provided a way that man could obtain His blessings through grace, through Christ.

No man can approach God on his own terms. He needs an Advocate to represent Him and his concerns to God. This text informs us that God’s designated Mediator is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from Him no man can achieve a standing in His presence. Unlike sinners who fall short of obedience to God, Christ fulfilled the law, and fulfilled covenant duties **on behalf of His people to God.** As Israel’s Representative He obeyed God’s law for them; i.e, He accomplished the sinner’s obligations to God on their behalf and for them. In his life, He was God’s Representative mediating the concerns of God to men; but, He was also the believer’s Representative and fulfilled man’s legal responsibilities to God. For this reason we can say we are saved by the doing and dying of Christ.

The hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ demolishes any man-made faith that claims that man can become a god. The doctrine of Christ destroyed centuries of beliefs germane to Hellenistic man, the unity of all being, sometimes called the “great chain of being.” This was the idea that man was different from deity only by degree, not by nature. Thus, in Hellenistic thought, a man could be a god; man’s potential was unlimited. Thus, the Caesars saw themselves as gods with power to decree and deserving of worship. Christ’s mediation meant freedom from all man’s claims to divinity. The whole view, “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be” (Mormonism) is heresy plain and simple—a teaching so evil you can hear the snake hissing.

Christ’s mediation negates any claim that man-made institutions can mediate between God and man. The gulf between God and people is bridged only by the incarnate God-man, Jesus Christ. Scripture denies to any human agency the power of salvation whether that agency comes in the form of popes or kings; religious corporations or civil corporations. Mediation between

God and man is denied to the State and to the church; howbeit, the church proclaims the Mediatorial work of Christ. No human being or institution can honestly claim to link heaven and earth. Salvation is not in religion nor in a corporation nor system nor a government. It is in a Person—a human Being—Christ, the God-man. And on this objection, the Reformation was born: absolution was in Christ not the popes.

Christ's mediation sets men free because it limits all human power. It places limits on the State in that it denies the State a means of mediation to God. All ancient civilizations practiced a form of statism wherein kings claimed some kind of mediation between gods and the underworld.

The Egyptians believed their pharaoh to be the mediator between the gods and the world of men. After death the pharaoh became divine, identified with [Osiris](#), the father of [Horus](#) and god of the dead. He passed on his sacred powers and position to the new pharaoh, his son. The pharaoh's divine status was portrayed in metaphorical terms: his uraeus (the snake on his crown) spit flames of poison at his enemies; he was able to route thousands of his adversaries on the battlefield. He was all-powerful, knowing everything and controlling nature and fertility. His decrees were divine. To disobey pharaoh was to disobey God. However, the mediation of Christ destroys any proposition that the State mediates between Heaven and Earth.

Christ's mediation meant freedom from the claims of the divine state, the god-kings and the priest kings that controlled every ancient culture. Christ offered men the opportunity to enter the Kingdom of God. Men entered into it by recognizing the authority of Christ and surrendering to Him as Lord and Mediator. This, meant of course, the believer had to renounce the belief that Caesar was Lord. Caesar was not a god nor a mediator to God or God's representative to man. Gods decree, but Caesar's decrees were not divine nor were they sanctioned by the true Lawgiver. While man-made statues reflect morality, rarely do they reflect Biblical morality. Legislatures exist to get the will of man done among men; not the will of God done among men. *Acts of the State are not means of expanding the Kingdom of God on earth; and, at times demand resistance, not obedience.*

Christ as Mediator meant that governments had a limited role in this life. *A government that seeks to become all things to all men exceeds the limits of its authority.* The view that governments were not divine and limited led to the Magna Carta, and the English Puritan Revolution; and, ultimately, to the American Republic. The Magna Carta limited the King's men from making arrests for commercial purposes without a common law probable cause, without citizen witnesses, and repudiated the whole sham of exempting government officials from obedience to law. Even the king had to obey his own law. What a concept! *The mediation of Christ became the theological foundation of Western liberty because it means Sovereignty was in Christ and not the god-state.* To the extent we lose sight of the unique role of Christ, we tend

more and more to look to government as the source of human rights and the means of prosperity. Further, to the extent we lose sight of Christ as Mediator, we continue to lose our liberties—for we are endowed by our Creator, not government, with certain unalienable rights. Humanism, the belief that that man is a god, is the elevation of man, and the elevation of man always leads to a tyrannical state.

Because Christ is the Mediator between God and man and proclaimed the Kingdom of God, Kingdom order becomes the rule of life for the man, his family, his church, and his nation. When the Lord Jesus admonished men to pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” He was seeking men who would recognize the rule of God and surrender to it now; that is, it is the duty of men to bend themselves and their institutions to rule of Christ. Because He is the only Mediator between God and man, men would do well to “hear the Son” and not be so eager to hear what some president says on a daily basis. While Governments have a duty to dispense God’s justice toward the criminal element in society, government(s) cannot save us. They are not mediators of man to God nor are they mediators of God’s blessing to man. There is only one true God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

97. WISE MEN STILL WORSHIP HIM

WISE MEN AND FOOLS

Matthew 2

Webster says that a wise man is one who “shows good judgment.” In contrast to this is the fool who lacks discernment. Nothing is more painful than acting like a fool and then discover that one was not acting.

The world has yet to see its last fool. Since there are so many ways of becoming one, a man can't hope to dodge them all. ***But, he can avoid becoming an eternal fool by following the example of the wise men.***

The Bible paints a picture of wise men and a fool in the familiar Christmas story. The naked contrast between Herod and the Magi from Babylon stands out like white on black.

I introduce to you the fool, Herod the Great.

Matthew 2:3 “When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled . . .”

Herod was the unclean vulture that nested on the throne of Israel over the doves of God's flock. This opulent Edomite over parented the first century with moral cripples and ruled Palestine with a whip made of scorpion tails. His murderous history stands out like a giant crocodile among the rocks and ruins of the Roman Empire. With stealth and precision, he ferreted out his enemies and obliterated them. He had all the deception of Athalia, all the egomania of Napoleon, and all the cruelty of a Joseph Stalin.

In his bloody rule, he totally destroyed the Hasmonean dynasty—the noble priestly descendants of Israel's Maccabean hero, Mattathias. Herod's paranoia led him to murder his brother-in-law, Aristobulus by staging a drowning accident for him at the River Jordan. At his funeral, Herod shed copious tears. Later, he murdered Joseph, a rumored lover of his wife, Mariamne. Fearing reprisal from Mariamne's aged grandfather, Hyrcanus II, Herod ordered his execution. During Herod's journey to Rome, Mariamne heard the report about Herod's command to have her killed if he did not return safely. Upon returning from Rome, Mariamne's icy disposition enraged him, and he eventually eliminated her. Likewise, Herod had their two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus arrested and beaten and strangled at Sebaste. Because many among the soldiers protested this act, Herod ordered the execution of three hundred supporters. Shortly before his

death, the rabbis revolted at Jerusalem, and Herod had them burned. Because he suspected a plot to overthrow him, he ordered the execution of his son Antipater. Herod died five days later. Herod's reputation for killing family members caused Caesar to remark that he would rather be one of Herod's hogs than one of his sons.

A moral pigmy, Herod was capable of great deception and cruelty. He destroyed bands of Jewish guerrillas working in the countryside, collected tribute for Rome, and possessed great oratory ability, subtle diplomatic skills, and military decisiveness. He had all the qualities that Rome admired and God detested.

He was called "great" not because of his character, but because of his prodigious building programs and massive construction projects in Palestine, which are archaeological tourist attractions today. He built a Roman theater in Jerusalem. He constructed an amphitheater and a hippodrome outside her walls. West of the city, he built a palace for himself and three famous towers called Hippicu, Phasaël, and Mariamne. At the temple site, he reconstructed Israel's temple and expanded the temple grounds. Besides his great construction projects in Jerusalem, he beautified Antioch, Beirut, Damascus, Tyre, Sidon, Rhodes, and many other cities.

I introduce to you the wise men.

"Behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem . . ." (Mt. 2:1).

The Magi were the studious, schooled intellectuals from the cradle of civilization. Stargazers, collectors of wise sayings, students of the prophecies of Daniel, the Magi understood the Scriptures spoken by God's prophet in the sixth century B.C. Driven by faith, these sages organized a small caravan to embark on a long, expensive pilgrimage to the city of Jewish kings.

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews," they queried (Mt. 2:2).

I introduce to you the baby Jesus.

. . . they saw the young child with Mary his mother" (Mt. 2:11).

He was the pure, perfect, incarnate Son of God. A Descendent of David, Heir to the throne, Fulfiller of prophecy, and rightful King of Israel, he was born in a manger. John tells us that He was the Word made flesh, the visible manifestation of the invisible God and the exact representation of His image. Truly Divine and truly human, the "Hope of the Ages" tabernacled among men. He was born of the virgin Mary, announced by angels, and signaled by a celestial star. Wrapped in swaddling clothes, He was born once so sinners did not have to die twice (Revelation 20:14).

Why were the wise men wise?

“ . . . we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.”

They were wise because they came to worship Christ.

They understood worship means “to ascribe honor.” Hence, worship means to “announce worth.” The Magi were not in Jerusalem to tour the city, to visit the magnificent, world-famous Jewish temple, nor to luxuriate on plush couches in Herod’s palace. They were not in the holy city to meditate, to go on a fast, to participate in some religious ecstasy, or plunge themselves into some carnal revelry. They came to honor the rightful Heir to the throne, the promised Messiah, the Anointed One spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Daniel 9:24). The sages did not come to pray, or to receive a blessing, or to hear words of wisdom. They came to worship the child King and to honor Him.

They were wise because they responded properly to revelation.

Their worship was not self-initiated or merely a presumptive act. They were obeying God. Possibly, they knew the Holy Scriptures given to them by Daniel (9:24ff), and when they saw the star in the east, they responded by faith and followed that star to the dwelling place of Jesus. They did not question the revelation or hesitate to engage the mission. They followed the star not knowing where it would lead them. Wise men respond to revelation.

They were wise because they were willing to pay the cost of worship.

Worship is expensive. When it became clear that God was calling them to honor a king, they were willing to leave the comforts of home, their duties, their families and friends to worship Jesus. They traveled over 500 miles, endured sand storms, torrential rains, aches and pains, cold and heat to come and worship the Christ child. They purchased equipment, supplies, and camels to make the arduous journey. It was expensive both in shekels and time to honor this newborn king. Wise men do not consider worship a waste of time or money, but an essential privilege in a man’s sacred duties.

They were wise because they were seeking Christ.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they inquired about the location of the newborn king. They did not have all the answers. They did not know where He was dwelling. They did not know what he looked like or in what city He was born. To worship, they had to make many inquiries. They adjusted themselves and their plans to go in search of Jesus. Wise men still seek Him.

They were wise because they made preparations to worship Christ.

The Magi did not arrive at the stable empty handed. They made arrangements to take care of the family farm, to have the chores done, to arrange for transportation, and to purchase gifts for a king. How many people do you know who come to church without a Bible, without a checkbook, and without spiritual preparation? He is worthy of thoughtful praise, wholehearted singing, lavish gifts, and hilarious giving. Wise men prepare for worship!

They were wise because they honored Christ with their wealth.

When they found the Christ Child, they gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh—gifts appropriate for a king—the best from the east. Worship is not about what we can get or feel or experience. It is about giving to Christ the honor due him. When I hear people say, “I didn’t get anything out of church today,” I know they did not come to worship. Worship is not about getting. It is about giving. It is not about taking something away, but giving something away. Wise men give gifts to Jesus.

Wise men still worship Him

It is always wise to leave our homes, and go to the home of Christ. It is always wise to take our eyes off of ourselves, off of our businesses, off of our duties, and to honor One greater than us. It is always wise to come into the presence of Jesus with a sacrifice worthy of His greatness. It is always wise to lavish our praise, our talents, and our wealth on Jesus. How wise are we?

Fools still want to eliminate him

“He was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him Then Herod . . . was exceedingly wroth” (Matthew 2:3, 16).

In contrast to the spiritual wealth of the wise men was the impecunity of soul in Herod. Instead of being at peace, he was troubled. Instead of being overjoyed, he was exceeding angry. Instead of seeking Christ to worship Him, he sought baby Jesus to eliminate Him. Fearful and perplexed, the aging butcher issued an executive order to knife all the babies in and around the Village of Bethlehem.

The spirit of Herod still lives in pagan hearts. There are many people who are troubled about saying, “Merry Christmas” or a placed nativity scene in the public square. They demand society replace Christ with Santa Clause and “Joy to the World” with songs about Santa’s reindeer and the celebration of the birth of Christ with a celebration of Hanukkah. They use their wealth and influence to eradicate the name of Christ from our public schools, the name of God from the pledge of allegiance, and the Ten Commandments from courtroom walls. They are as fanatical about control and power and the establishing of a secular state as Herod of old.

Are you like Herod, threatened by the presence of One greater than yourself, or are you like the Magi who dared to worship One greater than themselves? *Are you a wise man or a fool?*

In wisdom, the Magi believed, left their homes, and traveled a great distance to honor Christ with their wealth. By their devotion, they forged a trail of faith for those who long to know salvation and the meaning of the ages.

Out of fear and anger, Herod played the fool and he left a wake of destruction in his path. In his self-centeredness, he cluttered the first century with bruised and broken lives, with divorce and deceit, with injury and incest, with death and destruction.

The fool lost his soul in hell and he took all of his children with him.

Life is filled with choices, and one of the choices you will need to make is, “What place will Christ have in my life?” Wise men confess Him as Lord and Master, but fools ascend the throne. Wise men submit to Him; fools refuse to bow the knee. Wise men take time to honor Him; fools haven’t the time to care. Wise men leave the comforts of their home in search of Christ, fools stay home and work on the family car. Wise men make Him their first priority; fools consider Him the last.

We may all be fools in many ways, but there is no greater fool than one who rejects God’s Son.

You may be wise to the world, but without Christ, you are Satan’s fool. If you honor Him in this life, you will have Him as a friend in the afterlife; If you honor Him on earth, He will honor you in heaven. If you bow the knee willingly today, you won’t have to bow the knee forcibly tomorrow.

If you know Christ, you have life; if you say “No” to Him, you will lose your life. Be wise and worship the Son. (First Printed in Interest Magazine)

98. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Reality of the Resurrected Christ

1 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.

Since some Thessalonian believers had died since Paul's first visit to the city. Many in the church were distressed over the death of family members and friends. Apparently, some of the Thessalonians had adopted the idea that believers who die before the Second Coming would have a serious handicap over those who survive and are still living. Perhaps they were thinking that the dead would not participate in the benefits of the Second Coming.

Definitely, every generation has the hope that Christ will return in their lifetime.

Paul begins by saying "I do not want you to be ignorant" (v. 18). Such introductory prefaces are common in the epistles (cf. Romans 1:13; 11:25; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 12:1; 2 Corinthians 1:8). Ignorance about what happens when a believing family member dies can be quite distressing. It can have serious negative emotional and spiritual ramifications. Despair and hopelessness is not a condition germane to the faith. Christians are permitted to grieve over dead Christian family members and close friends. Even Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus His friend (John 11:35.) But, grief, however, must always be tempered by hope and joy, because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Notice the present tense "to be present." Consequently, believers have an entirely different perspective about death than pagans and the religious cults.

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

Into this cave of despair, Paul lit a candle of hope. This hope was not based on human philosophy, or human opinions, or human propositions. He based this hope on an essential fact—THE HISTORICAL RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. Since Christ defeated death by virtue of his resurrection, He is the Lord. If Christ defeated death, then He solved man's fundamental problem. If He solved man's fundamental problem, then there is forensic proof He can solve "our" fundamental problem—death of the body.

The use of the term “sleep” to describe physical death is common in Scripture (e.g., Genesis 47:30; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 2:10; Matthew 27:52; John 11:11-13; Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 2:39; 15:6, 18). Dead people often look like they are sleeping. The English word “cemetery” comes from this same Greek word (*koimaomai*) and means “a sleeping place.” This is not to be confused with “soul sleep.” When a believer dies, he goes to be with the Lord immediately! Thus, in using the term “sleep,” Jesus distinguishes between the wicked dead, and righteous believers who “sleep in Jesus” (4:14). The soul of believers is not asleep. Only their decaying bodies. God’s salvation includes the redemption of the body which is here explained in resurrection terms. These mortal bodies will one day receive immortality.

Romans 8:11: “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

The Christ who died and rose again will come again, and when He comes again, He will come with all those that died in the faith. In other words, the holy dead are safe and secure in the arms of Jesus.

[Note: This passage does not augur well for radical preterism that teaches “sleeping” refers to some type of spiritual sloth—a lethargic state that will dissipate at the Lord’s judgment on Jerusalem in 70 AD wherein sleepy Christians will be invigorated by His invisible coming in 70 AD. “He brings with him” is not the same as “raise them up.” The radical preterist view that turns the “second resurrection” into a spiritual event falls into the error of the Gnostics; i.e., it is essential neo-platonic. For a full refutation on “full Preterism”, see Brian Schwerley’s excellent work on the Rapture of the Saints, an Exposition of 1 Thessalonians 4:12-18, on which many of my comments are based.]

The Revelation of the Parousia

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.

The Greeks speculated about life after death. Philosophers reason about the inexplicable mystery of death. But, Paul does not contemplate or speculate. He does not try to comfort these bereaving saints with speculative theories. His belief system is based on revelation, and he anchors hope to the sure Word of God. The expression “by the word of the Lord” assuredly refers to the receiving of direct revelation from Christ to one of the apostles or even to Paul himself.

The pronoun “we” includes all Christians who are alive at His Parousia. To narrow this to a slice of Christians living at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem is the same interpretive error the Pharisees made when they narrowed violations of the law to only the acts of violence saying,

e.g., “thou shall not murder” refers only to a homicidal act (cf. Matthew 5:20ff). Remember, Jesus expanded the command to its original application which included the prohibition of “anger” leading up to malicious act of passion. Likewise, the “we” here is generic and not specific. One must be very careful at coming to dogmatic theological conclusions on the basis of the words, “we,” “our,” “us,” or “you” (plural).

The word “coming” is the Greek word *Parousia*. For this reason, scholars refer to the second coming as the “Parousia of Christ.” The word means “coming” or “arrival” or “presence” and is used in 2:19 and 3:19. The word is used in many different ways in the NT and does not always refer to the Second Advent of our Lord. Here it does! Christ is coming again in history!

When He comes, there will be Christians on the earth, “we which are alive.” The use of the pronoun “we” indicates that Paul had this hope burning in his heart at the time of writing his epistle. The phrase “shall not prevent” means “to precede.” In the Greek, the word “prevent” is announced with a double negative (no, not [\[1\]](#)). Paul assures us the living shall not rise until the Christian dead have risen.

[It is extremely difficult to see how consistent preterists can contend that this passage refers to the events of 70 AD. Terms like “sleep,” “bring with him,” “dead in Christ will rise first,” “so we shall always be with the Lord” are expressions related to the Parousia at the end of the Christian age and not some spiritual escalation due to the Roman assault on Jews and Christians during the reign of Nero and Titus. The error of radical preterism is that it redefines the Savior’s victory in terms of a secret, undetectable, spiritual victory (a second and final coming in 70 AD) that even the church of Christ was unaware of until the nineteenth century.]

The Return of Christ

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . .

What Will We See?

We will not see an angel. The Lord will not send a messenger or emissary or special agent. This event is so important in the heart of God, the great Administrator of the Universe will step out of His palace of praise to meet His bride personally. We will see Christ Himself. The verb “descend” (*katabaino*) literally means “to go down.” The descent is from heaven to earth. He will be arrayed in all his glory and majesty to welcome his people into their eternal home. His return is bodily and physically, not spiritual and symbolic. As he ascended into heaven bodily, he will return physically, materially, and tangibly (Acts 1:11; 5:31-23). His return will be visible to the naked eye.

Note the three coterminous acts associated with His physical, bodily descent out of heaven. This is not a private, invisible, secret coming, but a public appearance. This is something that appeals to human senses; that is, this is a material, physical experience of which facts in a court of law are made up of: What did you hear? What did you feel? What did you see?

What Will We Hear?

We will hear three distinct audible sounds. First, we will hear **A THUNDERING SHOUT** (*keleusma* [2])! So piercing will be his whoop and howler, it will awake the dead. Every grave on the earth and in the sea will hear the Captain's command, "COME!!!" Whether believers are buried in shallow graves or under tons of geologic rock, the Christian dead will rise and come forth leaping like calves released from the stall to meet the Savior (Malachi 4:1-4). Our Lord spoke of this when He said, "all who are in the graves will hear His voice" (John 5:28). This is *his own* command proceeding from *his* lips to *his* own sheep. It is not an order given to him, but a command issued *by* our Captain.

Second, there will be the beautiful voice of the archangel. The only archangel mentioned by name in Scripture is Michael (see Jude 9; Revelation 12:7; Daniel 10:13). In Daniel 10:13 he is called one of "the chief princes." Scripture indicates that there are different ranks of angels and archangels are probably the cardinal authorities of the angelic armies. The Bible tells us that our Savior will come with all the holy angels (Matthew 25:31). Possibly, this archangel summons the mighty hosts of heaven to descend with our Lord. Angels ministered to Jesus during His time of humiliation (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13) and have always shown empathy regarding the salvation of sinners (Matthew 18:10). Subsequently, it is fitting that they are present at the Parousia and destruction of the wicked. So glorious is this event, the conductor of the heavenly choir will take leave of his duties to lead this procession with a song of triumphant praise.

Third, we will hear the distinct, clear blast of heaven's trumpet. It will announce the command to assemble. From above the earth and from below the earth, the saints will fall in rank to welcome Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords. The blast of the trumpet in Scripture calls to mind a number of uses. The two silver trumpets blown by the priests were used to call the people of God together for worship (Numbers 10:3), to sound the call for the Israelites to begin their journeys in the wilderness (Numbers 10:5-6), to sound the alarm to go to prepare for war (Numbers 10:9), and they were blown over the sacrifices (Numbers 10:10; 2 Chronicles 29:28). Trumpets were blown to announce the year of Jubilee when land was released to the original owners and slaves were set free (Leviticus 25:8-17). All of this symbolized the redemption and freedom wrought by Jesus Christ. Our Lord even spoke of "the favorable year of the LORD" was fulfilled in His ministry (Luke 4:16-21; cf. Isaiah 61:1-3). Further, the sound of a "great trumpet" announced the launching of the gospel to the world (Matthew 24:31). But, this may be symbolic. With the trumpet blast a great work commenced where God's gospel servants went forth as an

army to conquer souls with the sword of the Spirit. The apostles and evangelists went forth gathering together God's elect into a new nation, the true Israel of God, His church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

Further, trumpet blasts announce the judgment of God. The use of the trumpet is also conjoined with Old Testament theophanies. In Psalm 47:5, God ascends to the temple mount accompanied by the ark of the covenant with a shout and the sound of a trumpet. Jehovah's descent to Mount Sinai to speak to His people was accompanied with "*the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled*" (Isaiah 27:13; Zechariah 9:12; Revelation 8:2-11:15; Exodus 19:16, 19; cf. Hebrews 12:19).

After looking at the use of the trumpet in Scripture, we see why the trumpet is such an appropriate icon at the Parousia of Christ. In fact, the second coming, more than any other event, calls to mind all the usages of the trumpet in Scripture which involves: judgment of the wicked, the resurrection of the righteous, the assembling together of the saints of God, their association together in the accomplishments of redemption. At the Parousia our bodies are glorified and set free decay and the earth itself finds its liberation from the bondage of sin. This is the eternal Sabbath rest and eternal Jubilee. The trumpet calls all of God's people to worship. What a blessed trumpet blast this will be!

What Will We Feel?

I am not sure what we will feel. Perhaps, we will feel the sensation and thrill of a space shuttle lift as we are released from gravitational forces of earth. Paul refers to "a moment of the twinkling of an eye" where we will feel a mighty surge of power transform our mortal bodies into immortality (1 Corinthians 15:52). Interestingly, the word "moment" is the Greek word *atomos* (evn avto,mw|s), the smallest unit in Greek thought, from which we get the English Word "atom."

What Will We Say?

I am not sure, but the first words in Revelation five are "Worthy is the Lamb" (5:12). Or, maybe we will be like Zechariah who was so overwhelmed with the presence of God in the temple, he was not able to speak a word. I know this, that when the wonderment of our eternal state settles in, we will be in awe of the glory and splendor of the Lamb. Our thoughts will begin to understand the name of the Champion mentioned by Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The details in this passage seem to refute dispensationalism's secret rapture theory and the radical preterist doctrine of a clandestine, inaudible, indiscernible Second Coming of Christ?

The Resurrection of the Christian Dead

16 and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Following the wondrous sounds, we have the resurrection of the dead. The word “rise” is a term of resurrection. This is not resuscitation, nor reconstruction, nor revival of a faith statement. It is a statement of fact. The Christian dead who will rise first will receive **a resurrected body**. It will be a real, physical, spiritually-generated resurrected body like the Lord had after he left the tomb. It will be **a glorified body**—an object of beauty and health and ability. It will be **a spiritual body**—that is, it will be adapted through God’s metamorphic power to serve and submit to the regenerated, human spirit. It will be **an incorruptible body**; i.e., it will no longer be mortal or subject to humiliation, disease, decay, and death. The sag, droop, and wrinkle will no longer plague this new creation. Throughout the ages believers have suffered terribly from disease and fire and cruel wars. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the battlefield graves will yield their prisoners. The deserts that have bleached the sun-baked bones of martyrs will release their grip, and they will rise. In Scripture, this is called the first resurrection and if any want to be a part of it, they must trust Christ now (John 5:24ff).

[Note: This could not possibly refer to 70 AD as no one rose from the dead during the Jewish War. In Matthew 24, the Lord said nothing about a resurrection from the dead. Instead, our Lord urged believers to flee Jerusalem and to go into hiding. The fact that Paul is expounding the resurrection of “the dead who are in Christ” (*oi nekroi en Kristo*) rules out the radical preterist view that this account describes only a spiritual event. Further, this cannot refer to regeneration of *Christian* souls, for these dead souls are already saved and in heaven. It cannot refer to a revival of *Christian* souls, for such a thing is impossible and unnecessary. Finally, this is not a partial resurrection of privileged saints as the Scripture warrants no such concoction.]

The Resurrection / Rapture of the Saints**17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,**

Having announced the glorious destiny of the Christian dead, the apostle now addresses the destiny of living saints on earth when Christ returns.

The adverb “then” (*epeita*) simply means “then after” and is used to introduce the second result of the Redeemer’s descent from heaven.

By using the pronoun “we,” the expositor can correctly conclude that Paul was expecting the coming of Christ in his day. The phrase “alive and remain” anticipates some part of the Church being alive on earth when Christ returns. Every generation has the hope that Christ will return in their life time. And, after two millenniums of Christian history, that hope burns brighter each and every day.

The word “caught up” is the Greek word *harpzo* (a`rpaghso,meqa), a future indicative, which means “to snatch away.” It is translated “to catch away” (Acts 8:39), “to seize by force” (John 6:15), “to claim for one’s self” (Matthew 25:6), “to move to a new place” (John 14:1-6; Philippians 3:20-21) and “to rescue from danger” (Acts 23:10). In Matthew 13:19 the word is used to describe the wicked one who “snatches away” the word sown in the hearer’s heart. In Acts 8:39 the word is used to describe Philip being caught away suddenly by the Holy Spirit. In Revelation 12:5 the Christ Child is “caught up” to God to protect Him from the power of the dragon. In Jude 23 the word is used of “seizing” someone *out* of the fire. The idea of complete removal is implied by the context. The translators during the growth of the church used the Latin word “*rapto*” as a translation of the Greek word *harpzo*. Hence, we get the word “rapture” from the Latin. The terms “rise,” “caught up,” “rapto,” and “rapture” are terms of resurrection. When Christ returns, the Christian dead will rise first, and those believers who are alive on earth at the Parousia will be suddenly snatched from the earth to meet the Lord in the clouds.

[Radical preterist make too much of the word “then” by errantly inserting several millenniums between verse sixteen and verse seventeen. The forcing of this text by radical preterist to propose a secret, physical resurrection during the events of 70 AD or a non-physical spiritual resurrection crosses the line into absurdity. If the rapture in this text is merely a spiritual event that takes place inside man, then why is it necessary for Jesus to descend bodily from heaven to meet them? For this reason, the radical preterist denies the physical resurrection and correlates it to a descending of the Spirit similar to the events of Pentecost wherein the Spirit filled the early disciples. A spiritual, subjective resurrection makes no sense exegetically, theologically, or historically!]

The Reunion of Loved Ones

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.

The phrase “caught up together with them” implies the living will be reunited with their loved ones. The place of this meeting is in the “air” or “sky” or “atmosphere.” Jesus is not coming to meet with His people “in the spirit” to revive their souls. This is a visible, physical, public “open air” meeting. The expression “to meet” (*eis apantesin*) “was a technical expression in Hellenistic Greek for the departure from a city of a delegation of citizens to meet an arriving dignitary in order to accord the person proper respect and honor by escorting the dignitary back to the city” (Wanamaker, p. 175). This will be a glorious reunion because all will have tangible, glorified bodies. It will be an **everlasting reunion** because we shall “ever be with the Lord.” It will be a **triumphant reunion** because we will be gathered around our victorious Savior. It will be a **happy reunion** because we will be with our Christian family in Christ.

[Again, the radical preterist spiritualizes the word “air” by interpreting it as “man’s spirit.”[\[3\]](#) Since the whole context of this section is about a bodily gathering with audible sounds and sights and the physical, corporal resurrection of saints, spiritualizing the word “air” is simply a manipulation of definitions to force a preterist interpretation on this passage.]

The Reassurance of Triumph

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Death separates loved ones and grief rushes in to fill the vacuum. Death seems so final, so absolute. What can possibly comfort broken hearts? Only the sure word of Christ. Paul exhorts the believers to take his revelation about the Parousia of Christ and to find in them comfort for the heart. The doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is not a fantasy, or myth, or speculation. It is a sure hope. Death is not the end. Death is not lord. Death is not the victor. Christ is Lord and He has defeated death by virtue of his resurrection in history. One day he will return and consummate that defeat with his glorious presence. This is our hope. This is our comfort.

Unfortunately, instead of comforting one another with these words, these words have been used to divide and multiply pain and anguish in the Christian community. The source of grief is over the timing of the rapture and the meaning of this event. In the past few decades, “rapture theology” has grown in popularity to include pretribulation views, mid tribulation views, pre-wrath raptures views, post tribulation views, and radical preterist views. There are even polls on the internet where a person can register their opinion about when the rapture will occur. Will a majority vote effect the timing of the rapture?

Several facts need to be pointed out.

First, this passage does not tell us when Christ will return. But, we know the Second Coming is a bodily return and not some kind of spiritual renewal akin to a revival.

Secondly, one cannot exegetically separate the rapture from the second coming. They are one in the same event in this text. Third, since 1st Thessalonians four and Christ’s comings precedes 1st Thessalonians five and Paul’s description of the day of the Lord and the sudden destruction that will come upon “them” (sons of darkness), it is exegetically sound to say that believers will be raptured before the destruction of chapter five engulfs the unbelieving world.

Furthermore, Paul assures the believers that they are not “appointed to wrath” in 5:9. This statement gives assurance that when God judges the world, not one drop of wrath will fall on his church. It appears from this context that whatever wrath and destruction God has for the future, believers will not experience any of it.

Finally, the consistent preterist view that this text applies to the events of 70 AD and the Lord's judgment of the Jewish nation boggles the mind. Such a conclusion is an abuse of language and must be discarded on the trash heap of failed theories. While the Lord comes many times in history to judge and assist His people, there is a Parousia at the end of the Christian Age that will bring all Christian men bodily into the presence of the Lord Christ.

Wherefore, Behold His glory and comfort one another with these words.

[1] *ou me pthasomen tous komathentas*

[2] The word "shout" (*keleusma*) occurs only here in the New Testament,. It is used to issue orders such as a military command, the shout of a chariot driver to his horses, the command of a huntsman to his dogs, or the cry of a Roman captain to his rowers to row.

[3] Preterist use 1 Peter 3:19 as a proof text to show that people are sometimes called "spirits." The passage 1 Peter 3:19, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison," cannot be a proof text for such a view because: a) The context makes it clear (v. 20) that Christ preached through Noah to Noah's generation which is now in prison. b) This passage says nothing about dead saints waiting to be released from Hades to go to heaven. c) Even if there was such a release, it would have occurred immediately upon the death or resurrection of Christ and not 40 years later at the coming in judgment upon Jerusalem. d) The people described in this passage are unbelievers who rejected the gospel in the days of Noah (v. 20). Dead saints are not addressed in this passage. ([Brian Schwertley](#))

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