

CREATION'S JUBILEE

By
Dr. Stephen E. Jones, M.A., ThD.

This book is dedicated to those who are called to the Ministry of the Conciliation as Ambassadors of Christ, to tell the world the good news of the Restoration of All Things.

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CHAPTER 1

The Millennium Question

Men have long speculated on what will happen in the ages to come. What will the condition of men be when they are raised (1 Cor. 15:35)? What is the purpose of the reign of Christ in the age to come, known to the Hebrews and early Christians as the Kingdom Age, or the Messianic Age? How does it differ from the age that follows it, described as "the new heaven and the new earth" having a "new Jerusalem"?

Perhaps even more confusing to people today is all this talk about man's ultimate abode in heaven. If we are to live in heaven, then why would the saints return to earth at the resurrection to reign with Christ as it says in Revelation 5:10 and other places? In fact, what is the purpose of the millennium? I have encountered people in the ministry who were also puzzled by these questions. If even they are puzzled, it should not be surprising that many average Christians are also puzzled. Some may have been receiving contradictory teachings and do not have the keys to sort it out for themselves.

It is our purpose in this book to break the seals on this topic and boldly strike out on what we can only call an awesome adventure. The first door can be unlocked only with the key of understanding the three main feast days of Israel.

The Three Feasts of Israel

Passover was the first feast of Israel, occurring in late March or early April. The people gathered at the place where God had placed His name, carrying with them the firstfruits of the barley, which was the first crop to ripen in the spring. Fifty days after the barley was offered to God, the people gathered again before God to give Him the firstfruits of the newly-ripened wheat. About four months later, in September, the people gathered a third time to give God the firstfruits of the wine, for this was the time of grape harvest.

These three feasts are prophetic in many ways. They speak of three stages of development in the Kingdom of God upon the earth. They speak of three anointings or manifestations of the Spirit that are associated with each stage of Kingdom development. And finally, the firstfruits themselves foreshadow the beginning of a greater harvest to come.

From Moses to Christ was a *Passover Age*, reflecting the first level of anointing and empowerment, wherein the Kingdom of God operated on a relatively small scale in the House of Israel. The day of Pentecost in Acts 2 began a *Pentecostal Age* with an enhanced level of the Holy Spirit's power, and this brought the Kingdom of God an entirely new empowerment. But even Paul acknowledged three times that this was only an EARNEST of the Spirit, a downpayment of something better that was yet to come. He looked for a *Tabernacles Age*, in which the FULLNESS of the Spirit would be poured

out, and the Kingdom of God would be established in the earth in its highest form and with its greatest power.

The key to understanding the Kingdom of God is to view it in its three stages of development, rather than pitting one view against another. Some say the Kingdom is NOW, and they are certainly correct. Others say the Kingdom is FUTURE, and they are correct as well. A few even say that the Kingdom of God began with Moses, and they too are correct. The Kingdom of God did indeed begin in the time of Moses when God first organized Israel into a kingdom at Horeb. But the Kingdom of God was manifested in a greater manner under a Pentecostal anointing in the second chapter of Acts.

But the Kingdom of God is also yet future as of this writing. We await the outpouring of the Spirit under the feast of Tabernacles, which will manifest the Kingdom of God in its highest form on the earth. Only this view is large enough to encompass both those who believe the “Kingdom Now” idea, as well as the “Future Kingdom” viewpoint.

Under Moses, the people of Israel no doubt thought that the Kingdom of God had come in its fullness in their day. It was not revealed to them that there was much more yet to come, except in a progressive revelation of the prophets who came later. Even so, most of the people did not understand the true meaning of their own feast days. **They had focused too much upon the rituals themselves in trying to please God.** This is why they did not recognize the true Lamb of God when John pointed Him out to the people (John 1:29), nor did they see that He would have to die at Passover for the sin of the world.

The early Church understood clearly the meaning of the feast of Passover. They wrote extensively about its fulfillment in Jesus' death. But the people were only Pentecostal in their outlook. They had moved up one level, and this had greatly increased their understanding of the plan of God. However, they had little or no understanding of the feast of Tabernacles. Pentecost was their prime focus, and this is perfectly understandable, for it was a new and marvelous thing in the earth. To many, it was the end and goal of all history. But the revelation of Tabernacles was not clearly understood, because it was too early for this to be revealed. Kingdom people had to have opportunity to explore the marvels of Pentecost before overwhelming them with a serious revelation of Tabernacles.

So God saved the revelation of the feast of Tabernacles for the end of the Pentecostal Age in the twentieth century. The types and shadows of Scripture seem to indicate that the Pentecostal Age was meant to last for about 40 Jubilee cycles, or 1960 years (49 x 40). A Jubilee time cycle is 49 years. The Jubilee year was the fiftieth year, but that was also the first year of the next Jubilee cycle. God measures time in sevens, and so 40 Jubilees of time would be 1960 years. It may be, then, that the Pentecostal Age, which began in 33 AD, began to come to a close in 1993 in preparation for a greater Age to come under the anointing of Tabernacles.

The First Resurrection

Speaking of faithful believers, Revelation 20:4-6 tells us:

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because

of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. *This is the first resurrection.* ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

This "first resurrection" is a limited resurrection. Because we are told that they are "blessed and holy" (vs. 6), we know that *only believers* will inherit life at this first resurrection. We are told that the rest of the dead will remain dead for another thousand years.

There are two main views regarding this first resurrection. Some believe that this first resurrection is simply the moment of salvation for the believer. At salvation, they say, the believer goes from death to life, and this they equate with resurrection. Believers then are called to rule and reign with Christ in an overcoming life on earth. They interpret the "thousand years" as an indefinite time period, on the grounds that the Greek word is plural and therefore should read "thousands," rather than merely one thousand years.

On the other hand, we believe that the term "resurrection" is never used in the Bible for anything but a physical raising from the dead. We certainly understand that the believer is given life at his justification, but this does not negate the need for resurrection. Paul made it plain in 1 Corinthians 15 that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the pattern and basis of our own resurrection. Jesus took time to carefully explain to His disciples that He had been raised in a physical body, though He was certainly not subject to the limitations of our present flesh. In Luke 24:36-43 Jesus even ate some food specifically to prove that He was not a spirit but was manifested in actual flesh and bone.

As for the time period of a thousand years, the Greek term used in Revelation 20 is *chilia*, which is derived from the root word *chilioi* and means "a thousand." The Greek word, *chilia*, is technically a plural word, but it is always translated in the singular. The Greek and Hebrew languages uses plurals a little differently than we do in English. For instance, in the Old Testament there is the term *elohim*, which is plural. It is translated "gods" when it refers to false gods, but it is usually translated "God" in the singular when the word is applied to the Creator. For example, Exodus 20:1-3 says,

¹ And God [elohim] spake all these words, saying, ² I am the LORD thy God [elohim], which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ Thou shalt have no other gods [elohim] before me.

Some have tried to use the word *elohim* to prove the trinity, but this is rather dubious, since other plural words cannot possibly be translated in the plural. One such case is the Hebrew word *paniym*, "faces." The singular is *pane*. The table of showbread is literally the "bread of faces," but if translators rendered it this way, it would only convey confusion to the average reader.

The same is true in the Greek language. We have a good example of how *chilia* is used in 2 Peter 3:8,

⁸ But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand [*chilia*] years, and a thousand [*chilia*] years as one day.

Since *chilia* is plural, some think it is an indefinite period of time and should be rendered “thousands.” Yet the same word is found many times in Revelation 7, where we read of the “twelve thousand” from each tribe of Israel. It would not be proper English to read it as “twelve thousands.” We picture twelve groups of a thousand, with each thousand being a single unit. They apparently picture a group of a thousand as denoting a thousand objects (or days); hence it is plural.

Since Peter was quoting the Septuagint version of Psalm 90:4, we find that the Greek word *chilia* is the equivalent of the Hebrew word, *eleph*, which can mean either a single thousand or thousands in the plural. It depends upon the context, much the same as the word *elohim* and *paniym*.

A man named Maon owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats (1 Sam. 25:2). The number of sheep is a specific number. As for the goats, it simply means a thousand goats, not “thousands of goats.” Likewise, in the New Testament, Jesus fed five thousand men, and each group of a thousand is meant to convey a specific number, not five groups of an indefinite number of thousands.

And so, while we encourage people to use a good concordance, we must yet use some caution and realize our limitations. The Greek and Hebrew languages use plurals differently from the English language. Therefore, when John tells us in Revelation 20 that some will reign with Christ for a thousand years, the translation is correct, even though *chilioi* is technically plural. Those who disagree are a small minority, because every major translator has rendered it correctly in the singular. So we believe that the period of a thousand years is meant to be a precise figure.

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness was designed in its very structure to indicate a 2,000 year Church Age, followed by a 1,000 year Kingdom Age. The Tabernacle was divided into three areas: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The outer court typifies the Passover Age with its Brazen Altar. Because it had no ceiling, one cannot measure the outer court like we can the tent of meeting. Yet it signifies the Old Testament era.

In the tent itself, the Holy Place typifies the Pentecostal Age and was 2,000 cubic cubits (10 x 20 x 10 cubits). The Holy of Holies typifies the Tabernacles Age and 1,000 cubic cubits (10 x 10 x 10 cubits). In man's approach to God, the Tabernacle was built to show the way to God; and even its room's dimensions portray the time of Pentecost and Tabernacles.

Those who teach that there is no future thousand-year reign of Christ assume that we have all the necessary spiritual empowerment to reign on earth NOW. The view does not take into consideration that Pentecost gave us only an earnest of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; and Eph. 1:14). They do not see that the Kingdom of God is manifested in stages. They do not understand the limitations of the pentecostal anointing. Christians

cannot fully reign on earth under the anointing of Passover, nor under the anointing of Pentecost. Only a Tabernacles anointing is sufficient to fully manifest the sons of God.

In other words, when a man is justified by faith in the blood of the Lamb, he receives a Passover anointing from God, but this does not bring him personally into the fullness of the Spirit. When a man receives the Spirit of God through the anointing of Pentecost, he receives a fresh anointing, but it is only an earnest, and he is still left with imperfections by which he falls short of the glory of God. Only when God pours out His Spirit upon us in the fulfillment of Tabernacles will we find the perfection and immortality we seek.

The first two feast days were fulfilled on historic dates according to the plan of God. No one has been able to enter permanently into a feast day's fulfillment ahead of its historic fulfillment. Moses entered into Tabernacles temporarily when he came down the mount with his face glorified (Exodus 34:29; 2 Cor. 3:7), but even he could not retain that glory permanently, for neither he nor the other overcomers could be perfected apart from the corporate body (Heb. 11:40).

There are many more such evidences that we could put forth, except that many of these require an in-depth knowledge of prophecy which is outside the scope of this book. And so we hope that these few words will suffice at least the majority of the readers for now.

The Second (General) Resurrection

One thousand years after the first resurrection comes the Great White Throne Judgment, in which ALL the (remaining) dead are raised. This will include both *believers and unbelievers*. This is proven by Jesus' words in John 5:28,29, where He speaks of this general resurrection:

²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, ²⁹ and shall come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

Note that this is a single "hour;" that is, both just and unjust will be raised at the same time. This is obviously not the first resurrection, where only believers are raised. This is a clear description of the second resurrection, where ALL who remain in the tombs will come forth for judgment.

Note also that there will be believers raised at this hour, along with unbelievers. Jesus says that the just will be given "life," while the unjust will be judged. Many teach today that all believers will be raised at the first resurrection; and all the unbelievers will be raised at the next resurrection. This simply cannot be true, if Jesus' words are to be believed.

Paul offers a double witness to this teaching that the second resurrection will include both good and bad. He says in Acts 24:14 and 15:

¹⁴ But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; ¹⁵

having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

This can only be referring to the second, not the first resurrection, because only “blessed and holy” people are raised the first time. We must conclude, then, that *NOT ALL Christians will be raised in the first resurrection*. Some must remain in the grave until the second resurrection, otherwise the statements by Jesus and Paul would be incorrect.

When we look at the rather detailed description of the second resurrection in Revelation 20, we find hints that there will be believers judged at that time. The very fact that the Book of Life is opened (20:12) hints at this. Why would the Book of Life be opened, if no one standing there were written in it? Furthermore, verse 15 strongly implies this when John says:

¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Certainly this means that many WILL BE FOUND written in that Book. And those who are will be given life at that time as Jesus said.

Who are these believers? Why would they need to be judged? I believe the key is found in Jesus’ teaching in Luke 12:35-50. Jesus speaks of “*the faithful and sensible steward whom his master will put in charge of his servants*” (12:42). Such people, Jesus says, will be given a place of rulership and responsibility. This says essentially the same thing as Revelation 20:4, where those of the first resurrection “*came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*”

There is, however, another kind of servant, or “slave.” Keep in mind that he is still called God’s “slave,” a believer, but he is not “*blessed and holy*” by any means. Jesus continues in verse 45 of Luke 12:

⁴⁵ But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, *both men and women*, and to eat and drink and get drunk; ⁴⁶ *the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces [dichotomeo, “to cut up by severely beating”], and assign him a place [meros, “portion, part that is due, lot”] with the unbelievers.*

In other words, these unsanctified slaves, who had been given authority over other slaves, but who abused their position, will NOT be given authority in the age to come. Instead, they will be beaten with stripes according to the law found in Deuteronomy 25. Furthermore, Jesus says they will receive their portion, or allotment “*with the unbelievers,*” that is, AT THE SAME TIME the unbelievers get their portion.

This does not mean their portions are the same as the unbelievers. Jesus made this clear in the next few verses when He said that the unsanctified servant will receive either few or many stripes (lashes), according to his deeds. It does NOT say that he will be classed as an unbeliever or that he will lose his portion (allotted inheritance). It merely says that he will not receive his portion in the resurrection of the just. He will get his

portion along with the unbelievers at the Great White Throne.

Keep in mind that in God's Law, a beating was a punishment that was done immediately in front of the judge and was strictly limited to 40 stripes (Deut. 25:3). Other punishments, such as restitution, required a sentence that normally took time for the sinner to work off the debt. And so Jesus uses the term "many stripes" and "few stripes" to indicate an intense but quick form of correction that is administered according to their knowledge of the Lord's will.

They will not be thrown into "the lake of fire" mentioned in Revelation 20 during that long, final Age, for that is the fate of the unsaved. Nonetheless, such believers will indeed be judged in a lesser manner. I believe that this is the judgment Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 3:15.

¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is *to be* revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but *he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.*

I do not believe that this fire is literal. They will, however, be judged according to God's fiery law, which in this case is up to 40 stripes. Christians in whom Jesus Christ is laid as a foundation, but who built upon that Foundation with wood, hay, and stubble, will suffer loss. They will be held accountable for their works, the things they built upon their foundation of faith in Jesus Christ. Their WORKS and their flawed CHARACTER will be tried by fire and will be burned. This will not destroy them, but will purify them by chastisement and make them fit for the Kingdom of God.

The unbelievers themselves, however, will be "*thrown into the lake of fire*" (Rev. 20:14 and 15). The question is whether or not this is a literal fire that differs from the other fire in which certain believers are tried. This will be the subject of our next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

The Sun of Righteousness or the Fire of God

The Old Testament closes with a prophecy of the coming of a new day, a great Age in which righteousness will flourish. Malachi 4:2 says,

² But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings [or, “sun rays”].

Malachi compares the coming of Christ to the dawning of a new day, which was known to the Hebrews as the Messianic, or Kingdom Age. The watchers of the night see the Morning Star first, followed by the first rays of the sun as dawn breaks. In Psalm 19:1 David says, “*The heavens are telling of the glory of God.*” He also describes the coming of Christ (the Sun) as “*as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.*”

A large portion of God’s revelation comes through nature. Jesus revealed the Kingdom mostly by telling parables that depicted such things as farming, tending vineyards, and astronomy. This is one of God’s favorite methods of revelation. So it should come as no surprise that the dawning of the sun should hold some major keys to understanding the coming of Christ.

Perhaps the most obvious characteristic of the sun is its LIGHT. This theme holds a prominent place in the Bible, because Jesus is to be “*the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man*” (John 1:9). Most people have already had a great deal of teaching on that subject, so we will instead deal with another theme—FIRE.

God’s Fire Brings Faith, Not Fear

When God revealed Himself to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, He spoke to them by a voice issuing out of a consuming fire. Deuteronomy 4 tells us,

³³ Has *any* people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard *it*, and survived? . . . ³⁶ Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.

We know that faith comes by hearing the word (Rom.10:17). Yet a large amount of Bible teaching is spent on making people AFRAID of the fire of God through hellfire and brimstone preaching. Many feel it their Christian duty to scare people into the Kingdom, and so they describe in great detail the most awful place they can imagine in their own minds. Yet when God chose to reveal Himself to Israel, He came as fire, not to frighten them, but to test their faith. We read of this in Exodus 20:18-21.

¹⁸ And all the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when

the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance. ¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." ²⁰ And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." ²¹ So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God *was*.

God SPOKE out of the midst of the fire. Paul says that faith comes by hearing His voice. The revelation of God did make Israel fearful, and they withdrew from His presence. Moses told them that God had manifested Himself in this way in order to prove them, or test their faith. If God had called them into a rose garden, the people would have needed no real faith, because they would not have had to overcome any fleshly fear. God makes it difficult in order to see if we really do trust Him not to destroy us when we do as He asks.

True godly fear is different from fleshly fear. Godly fear is trusting God in matters of life and death. This is the fear of God that was required of Israel and of us as well. For this reason Moses told the people, "*do not be afraid*," and then seemed to contradict himself by telling them that God had come to test them, "*that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin*." (Ex. 20:20). These are two different qualities of fear. The first makes us run FROM God; the second makes us run TO God. The New Testament tells us that "*perfect love casts out fear*" (1 John 4:18). This tells me that true godly fear, when mature, is actually perfect LOVE.

The fire of God should dwell within each of us as a burning love and desire to please Him. Moses had the fire within his own heart, as we shall soon show, and so He was able to approach God without fear.

If the fire of God makes us fearful and does not increase our faith, then something is wrong either in our own hearts or in our understanding of God. Perhaps God is not being portrayed correctly. Perhaps many are describing the fire incorrectly and imparting a carnal fear, often inadvertently. Fear has become such an ingrained way of life for many Christians. The victorious life of unshakable faith in God is quite rare, and, I believe, impossible without knowing the sovereignty of God and His love for us.

It is our purpose here to try to impart *faith* by teaching the truth about the fire of God. May you hear His voice speak out of the midst of the fire.

Fire and the Divine Law

Deuteronomy 33 records the blessing of Moses upon the nation of Israel before he died. In this blessing, we read in Deut. 33:2 and 3,

² **The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; at [or, "in"] His right hand there was flashing lightning [*esh-dath*, "fire-law"] for them.** ³ **Indeed, He loves the people; all Thy holy ones are in Thy hand, and they followed in Thy steps; everyone receives of Thy words.**

The New American Standard version (above) does not do justice to verse 2 when it uses the phrase, “*there was **flashing lightning** for them.*” The King James Version is more accurate in this instance, for it reads, “*From His right hand went a **fiery law** for them.*” The Hebrew term is *esh*, “fire,” and *dath*, “law.” So the text is worded to show us that the divine law is a fire that God gave to the people.

Furthermore, Moses says in the next verse that “*All Thy holy ones [or, saints] are in Thy hand.*” If the fiery law is in God’s hand, and the saints are also in His hand, it follows that the saints of God have been given the divine nature of this holy fire. It is manifested in the fact that they follow in His steps, and everyone receives His words. They not only believe His word, but they BECOME the word, even as Jesus Christ Himself was the Word (John 1:1). This prophecy is remarkable, for it tells us that the ultimate blessing of God is that we would be given the divine nature, pictured as fire, and imparted by the word of God. The prophet Isaiah explains what Moses wrote. Isaiah 33:14 tells us,

¹⁴ Sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling has seized the godless. Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continual burning? ¹⁵ He who walks righteously, and speaks with sincerity, he who rejects unjust gain, and shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe; he who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil;

Only the righteous can live in the divine presence and partake of the divine nature. This is well illustrated in the story of Daniel’s three friends, who were cast into the fiery furnace. The fire could not harm them, because the judgment of the law had no jurisdiction over the righteous. Their character was in harmony with the divine fire, and so the earthly fire had no power over them.

When Israel stood at the base of the mount, they had been justified by the blood of the lamb seven weeks earlier at Passover (when they came out of Egypt). Yet this did not mean they were ready for the next level of experience with the Holy Spirit of God at the foot of Horeb. This meeting with God was thereafter celebrated as the feast of Pentecost. Although they had been justified by faith, they were unable to experience Pentecost, because they were afraid to hear the voice of God. For this reason, the fulfillment of Pentecost was postponed for nearly 1,500 years, where we read the story in the second chapter of Acts.

The point is that “the church in the wilderness” under Moses (Acts 7:38) typified Christians who, though justified by faith, are unwilling or unable to move up to the second level of experience with God. Pentecost is an encounter with the divine fire, for it is a baptism of fire, designed to purify the people by destroying the flesh. It is not meant to destroy the person, but to free people from the bondage of their fleshly desires. This fire burns flesh and kills us. But we should not shrink from such a death, but embrace it, knowing that God is Love, and He is preparing us for a deeper relationship with Him.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote in 23:29,

²⁹ “Is not My word like fire?” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?”

The Word of God, or particularly His law, is like a fire because it reveals the very character and nature of its Author. The purpose of the law is to define sin (1 John 3:4). Otherwise, as Paul said, we would not have known coveting is sin, except the law told us, “*You shall not covet*” (Romans 7:7).

When we hear the Word of God coming out of the midst of the fire, we are only afraid because it unmask the sin within our hearts which we have so desperately tried to hide all our lives. All our defense mechanisms, self-justification, our rationalizations, our projection of guilt upon others, our blindness and refusal to see our own hearts as God sees them—all the secrets of the heart are made manifest by His word when we hear it speaking to us out of the midst of the fire.

Yes, this can be fearsome. The Ten Commandments give the general law principle, and the statutes define specifically how the principle is to be applied correctly. The judgments of the law are the penalties for each transgression. They are designed to restore the lawful order through restitution wherever possible, and to restore the sinner as well.

When we become Christians, we come before the bar of God’s justice as repentant sinners. We claim the death of Jesus as payment for all our sins—past, present, and future. From that moment on, we form a new and different relationship with the law. In time past we were afraid of its judgment; now we voluntarily submit ourselves to its judgment and teaching, that we may learn what sin is and how to refrain from sinning. As Isaiah said, we begin to learn *righteousness*.

Paul said that “*by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” (Rom. 3:20) How could we be expected to know what sin is and do something about it, if we have no knowledge of what sin is? And how could we know what sin is except by the law?

So this new relationship with the law is known to us as learning obedience, or sanctification. It comes AFTER and BECAUSE OF justification. We submit ourselves to the fiery law, and Jesus leads us through the fire of circumstances, a baptism of fire, and God begins to refine us as gold. As we draw near to Him, He speaks to us out of the midst of the fire even as He spoke to Israel of old.

This is as fearsome to our flesh today as it was to Israel at Sinai. The fire activates our inner fears that always accompany the sin in our hearts. Men today still run from the fiery law that God spoke to men out of the midst of the fire. They are still afraid of it, and out of this fear came the antinomian doctrine (“anti-law”). These are those who justify their sin by saying, “We are no longer under the law, but under grace.” What they really mean is, “We will uphold the laws that we agree with, such as those that define murder, theft, and adultery as sin; but anyone who brings up a law we disagree with or do not want to comply with—well, we are not under the law but under grace.”

Most people misunderstand Paul’s statement in Romans 6:14 where he says, “*you are not under law, but under grace.*” In the Bible, when a man was convicted of sin by the law of God, he was “under law” until such time as the debt was paid. For instance, if convicted of stealing \$1,000, the law would tell him to pay his victim double restitution, or \$2,000. If he could not pay the debt, he had to work off the debt until it was paid. The time it took to work off the debt was the time the man was “under the law.” Once the debt

was paid, he was “under grace,” because his sin no longer had dominion over him. He was forgiven.

Paul was telling us that Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for our sin. Hence, we are not under law, but under grace. Our sin no longer has dominion over us. But does this mean we may now continue in sin? Of course not. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). The law tells us what sin is. The law was never meant to justify sinners, nor could it. However, the solution is not to put away the law, thereby legalizing sin. The solution is to apply Jesus’ blood to our sins, believing that He has paid the full penalty for all our sin. This puts us “under grace” so that we are free to be servants of God in obedience to His law. We were justified in order to begin learning obedience to the will of God. The foundational revelation of God’s will came through Moses in the divine law.

There are certain parts of the law, particularly the blood sacrifices and rituals relating to the physical temple and Levitical priesthood that have been altered in the New Testament. The principles remain the same, but they have been given a new form in the Age of Pentecost. Yet even these were not really put away; only their outward form changed. We still have a blood sacrifice; Jesus was the true Lamb of God. We still have a temple; we are the temple of God. We still have a priesthood; it is a Melchisedec priesthood. We still have a high priest; He is alive forever.

But let us not think that the moral laws have been put away, lest we become lawless. Theft, murder, and adultery are still sins. Unfortunately, many Christians seldom study the law of God, because they have been told that it was put away. For this reason few understand the judgments of the law. This is most serious when we study the idea of the final judgment of the wicked at the Great White Throne. Without an understanding of the judgments of the law, we will not be able to know the nature of the lake of fire, which is the judgment of the sinners.

God will judge the world by His fiery law, for that is how all sin is judged. A study of the law itself will show us the true purpose of judgment. Isaiah 26:9 says:

⁹ For when the earth experiences Thy judgments, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

The judgments of the law are corrective and remedial. They are designed to bring about true forgiveness, not a perpetual state of unforgiveness. The purpose of the Age of Tabernacles is to give the earth a sabbatical rest in the seventh thousand year, so that the people will be free to learn the ways of God. We are about to enter into a time when all nations will see the exaltation of the Kingdom of God and its glory. They will see the blessings of its citizens and desire to learn its laws (Isaiah 2:2-4). They will accept Jesus Christ as the King of the Earth and turn the whole earth into a Universal Kingdom. They will not flee in terror at His judgments; they will see the justice and mercy of God’s law in direct contrast to the laws of men, and they will rejoice at His marvelous wisdom.

The Baptism of Fire

The first and most immediate way in which we may experience the fire of God is by the baptism of fire. This does not mean that we must be burned alive in a literal flame. An early Church leader 1800 years ago, Clement of Alexandria (Origen’s teacher), described it:

“Fire is conceived of as a beneficent and strong power, destroying what is base, preserving what is good; therefore this fire is called “wise” by the Prophets . . . We say that the fire purifies not the flesh but sinful souls, not an all-devouring vulgar [earthly, natural] fire, but the “wise fire” as we call it, the fire that “pierceth the soul” which passes through it.” (*Stromata* VII, 2:5-12)

In another place Clement again describes these fiery judgments of God as being “*saving and disciplinary, leading to conversion*” (*Stromata* VI, 6). Where did he and many others like him get this teaching? They got it from the Word of God, particularly where it teaches about the baptism of fire.

In Malachi 3:2 and 3 the prophet says:

² But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³ And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.

Four hundred years after Malachi penned these words, John the Baptist said of Jesus in Matt. 3:11, 12:

¹¹ As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Jesus Himself said in Luke 12:49,

⁴⁹ "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"

There is no record that Jesus ever burned anyone with fire when He came 2,000 years ago. He did not call fire down from heaven upon His enemies. However, His ministry did burn the chaff out of people, most notably His disciples. It was not a literal fire, but the spiritual fire of tribulation, trials, and testings of their faith.

It was a common teaching in the early Church that the baptism of fire was to be applied in two different ages: (1) *in the present age*, when we repent, or accuse ourselves before God, submitting to His discipline, even as David did; and (2) *in the next age*, when our works are tried by fire (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Both occasions were considered to be baptisms of fire. Those who wished to avoid the second one must submit to the first. In either case, they said, we must enter the Kingdom, or Paradise, by means of the flaming sword of the cherubim who guard the tree of life (Genesis 3:24).

Not that this concept was especially new, for all of the men and women trained of God throughout the Old Testament went through the same crucible of fire. Jesus intimated that this fire had already been kindled. It is the way God has always refined His people to separate dross from gold. It is the way God removes the chaff from the wheat in

our hearts. For thousands of years, God has dealt with His people by this “fire.” He has done it for two reasons: (1) To cause us to know Him as He is, for He has revealed Himself to us as fire; and (2) to train us for service.

We are all born with hearts that are “desperately wicked.” The gold in our heart is alloyed, mixed with impurities not readily apparent until He sits as the great Refiner. He puts our hearts into various solutions and begins to stir the mixture, patiently waiting for the big reaction. When the time is right, suddenly a moment of crisis hits, and a lesser metal crystallizes and falls to the bottom or foams to the top. The impurities are dealt with one by one, using different solutions, until finally a fine gold powder falls out of solution, ready to be put in the fire to melt it into a solid lump.

When people face adversity, they often go to their pastors to find out why God allowed such awful things to happen to them. They get many different responses, but often the pastor quickly tries to justify God. “Don’t blame it on God; it’s the devils fault,” they say. Or some say, “God is obviously very angry with you; you must have done something terrible to deserve God’s wrath like that.” (One of Job’s friends believed this, but he was wrong.)

More often than not, God is merely refining you. It’s not that you have done something bad that brought God’s judgment upon you. We all go through such trials periodically. It is, of course, because we are all alloyed, so in that sense it is because of sin within us. But He does not subject us to the fire for the purpose of destroying us, but of refining us to teach us righteousness.

He is, after all, our heavenly Father. He is not like imperfect earthly parents, who often punish rather than chastise. If they are mentally unbalanced, they have even been known to continue beating a child until he is seriously injured or even dead. I have heard of some parents even burning their children, supposedly to teach them obedience. But God is not like this. God’s judgments arise *with healing in His wings*, not to roast us to death, but to heal us of all ills, the greatest of which is the sin-sick soul. Until we know this side of God’s nature, we do not really know Him very well at all.

Moses’ Example

Moses learned firsthand how God trains His people. Circumstances forced Moses into the harsh wilderness, where the sun of righteousness beat down upon him, driving him by heat, by hunger, and by thirst into the merciless sand.

Moses faced many adverse circumstances during the next 40 years, which taught him how to rely upon God in numerous impossible situations. In trying circumstances, where he could turn to no one else, he had only one way to handle it: PRAYER. When Moses emerged from the wilderness 40 years later, he was a very different person. He had been refined 40 years by the fiery sword of the cherubim into the type of man capable of forming a new nation and leading them to the Promised Land.

After 40 years of training, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush to call him into service. The burning bush that he saw was his own heart—a natural, earthly bush wherein was the abiding presence of God. A bush that was saturated with fire, but yet not consumed. A bush that could dwell with the “*continual burning*” (Isaiah 33:14,15) and live.

After Moses, it became Israel's turn to learn the same lessons in the same harsh wilderness where Moses had met God. God led them first into a trap by the Red Sea. He put Israel's gold into a refining solution, which suddenly brought out their inner FEAR of Pharaoh. How else could this worthless impurity have been made manifest? God did this on purpose, not to make them afraid, but to bring their fear to light so it could be eliminated as dross by the mighty hand of God as He opened a way through the Red Sea.

God led them through hunger and thirst and through enemy territory. *It was no picnic on the way to the Kingdom.* It was hard training. But God will have no spoiled brats inheriting His Kingdom. Hebrews 12:6 says:

⁶For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.

If anyone would rather go the easier route or if any would envy the wicked who seem to have it all, keep in mind that this is the mark of an illegitimate son, not a true son of God (Hebrews 12:8).

His sons have a great task ahead of ruling over cities, regions, and nations. He will give these jobs to those who are called. And those He calls, He also trains in order to qualify them for rulership. And so He comes to purge His people. He sits as a refiner of silver and of gold. He comes as the Sun of righteousness to heal us inwardly of the pollution of the world. He comes as a fire to try our faith as gold (1 Peter 1:7). This is the true baptism of fire, which He has already kindled upon the earth.

The Fiery Law Corrects Us

A truck driver recently was called to haul a load of zinc. He had just finished hauling a load of tomatoes and neglected to wash out the inside of the truck before loading the zinc. When he reached his destination and opened up the back end of the truck to unload the zinc, it exploded in his face. No one had told him that the acid in tomatoes would react in this way to zinc.

Zinc is one of the impurities that must be removed from gold in the refining process. It is highly volatile. As a mineral, it is also very bitter tasting. Many of us have zinc (bitterness, wormwood) in our hearts. Someone comes along with acid behavior, and we explode in his face! There are many tomatoes out there, whom God uses to refine the zinc out of our gold.

For every zinc problem, there is a corresponding tomato. That is a spiritual law. The dross must be removed before our hearts can be refined by the baptism of fire into pure gold. It will not leave our hearts by itself. It must first manifest itself, crystallize, or bubble to the surface before Jesus removes it out of our lives. Lev. 19:17 and 18 says,

¹⁷ 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.

¹⁸ 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

This kind of impurity does NOT automatically flee from our hearts the moment we are justified. It is something that Christians learn as a part of the sanctification

process. There are many such impurities in our hearts, but as we follow Him through the fire, listening to His voice calling to us, our faith begins to grow. We soon come to see a tremendous truth that Paul wrote in Romans 8:28,

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

No matter how hot the fire, no matter how desolate the wilderness around us, the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. The crucible of God shall bring forth pure gold, for the Word spoken out of the midst of the fire shall not return to Him void, but shall accomplish its intended purpose.

The justice of God's law demands restitution and correction. All sin is reckoned as a debt to be paid to the victims of injustice, and the judgments are always in direct proportion to the magnitude of the crime (sin). For theft, the judgment is to repay the victim double. For any accidental destruction of a man's person or property, the one liable must pay all costs. These penalties not only recompense the victim, but they train thieves to work rather than to steal. They train careless men to be careful.

God's law is based upon the principle that *justice is never satisfied until full restitution has been paid to all the victims of injustice*. Nowadays, under man's twisted system, we incarcerate the thief, and the poor victim is almost never repaid. Furthermore, the thief's penalty seldom fits his crime. He is not corrected, because his sin is not treated as a debt to his victim, but to "society" in general. He does not work off the debt. He only rots in prison with nothing to do but brew about vengeance and learn from his buddies how not to get caught the next time. Justice is seldom done in such cases.

These laws of men have conditioned us to think in terms of *punishment* for the criminal, rather than righting the injustice. And when that does not seem to work, we get mad and demand *more punishment* (stiffer or mandatory prison sentences). We have a punishment mentality, rather than having the mind of Christ, which would lead us to know the precise measure of restitution to be paid that would correct the injustice and restore the lawful order.

That means when we sentence a thief to five years in prison, he emerges still a thief, because the victim has not been repaid his costs. The Bible makes no provision for a prison system, because such a system does nothing to re-establish the lawful order. It only punishes the sinner.

In cases where restitution is impossible, due to the nature of the crime, the penalty is death. In cases of premeditated murder, the murderer is incapable of repaying the victim two lives. In cases of adultery, the adulterer is incapable of restoring the lawful order. What is done cannot be undone except by the direct power of God.

And so in such cases, God instructed earthly courts to set aside the case and await the final judgment at the end of the age. The sinner was put to death to await his judgment.

There were cases, however, where God mercifully intervened to judge such cases immediately. In those cases, the murderers were not put to death, but merely placed in the hands of God, the highest and most merciful Judge. For instance, Cain was sent into

exile. David, too, who murdered Uriah, was dealt with directly by God. He submitted to the baptism of fire, the troubles that beset him from then on, and God refined his heart as gold.

Pardon Through Restitution

Those who have no faith in Jesus in this present age, either because they never heard of Him or they rejected Him, will have to pay the full penalty for their own sins. Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia (392-428 A.D.) wrote about this:

“The wicked, who have committed evil the whole period of their lives, shall be punished till they learn that, by continuing in sin, they only continue in misery. And when, by this means, they shall have been brought to fear God, and to regard Him with good will, they shall obtain the enjoyment of grace. For He never would have said, ‘Until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing’ (Matt. 5:26) unless we could be released from punishment, after having suffered adequately for sin; nor would he have said, ‘He shall be beaten with many stripes’ and again ‘He shall be beaten with few stripes’ (Lk. 12:47,48), unless the punishments to be endured for sin will have an end.” (Fragment IV)

We believe that the verses above apply specifically to Christians, and in this slight detail we differ from Theodore, who applied the verses to all men. Yet the difference is only slight, because we do agree that it is God’s law that established justice. That law tells us that once the “debt” for sin has been paid to all victims of injustice, it would become a travesty of justice to continue the punishment.

Full restitution as specified by God’s law is the means by which most will be restored. However, for the elect few, those who point to Jesus as having already paid the full penalty for their sins—these will receive life at the first resurrection without any “stripes” at all.

The sin and idolatry of ancient Israel is the main theme of the prophets in the Bible. She was then judged for sin—not to be utterly destroyed, but that she might find forgiveness for sin through the law of restitution. Israel’s iniquity was pardoned BECAUSE God had rewarded her double restitution for all her sins. Isaiah 40:1 and 2 says,

¹ "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God. ² "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins."

The Law on which this is based is found in Exodus 22:4, which says,

⁴ If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay *double*.

The sin of Babylon and all the Beast Empires of Daniel’s prophecy are treated in the same manner. In Revelation 18:4-6, John writes of this:

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues; ⁵ for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back *to her* double according to her deeds; in

the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.

It is a principle of God's law that once full restitution has been paid to the victims of injustice, the sinner is forgiven by the law, and their sins are NOT to be remembered. Such is the power of forgiveness. There are no "ex-cons" in a truly Christian nation. Past sins are buried in the deepest sea and forgotten completely. The restoration of the sinner is accomplished by means of the law of restitution (Exodus 22), which satisfies the law and then *demand*s forgiveness and restoration.

It has been commonly misunderstood that the law cannot forgive sin. The fact is, the law CAN forgive sin, provided its demands are met. The weakness of the law is in its inability to forgive SINNERS. It cannot acquit the guilty. However, the sacrifice for sin can satisfy the law. In the Old Testament this was in the form of blood sacrifices of lambs and goats until the time we obtained the final and permanent Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The law could forgive sin when its demands were satisfied.

Most of mankind since the beginning have not placed their faith in the blood of the true Lamb of God. Hence, they must pay the penalty for their own sins, according to the demands of the law. They will then receive a measure of forgiveness that the law is capable of dispensing. Nonetheless, in the final analysis if we break one law, we are guilty of breaking the whole law (James 2:10). For example, to steal is also to covet, which is also idolatry and spiritual adultery. It also shows a lack of love, which is ultimately hatred, and is therefore murder (Matt. 5:22).

Because of this, the sinner cannot possibly pay the full penalty for any sin, even the least infraction. The law still demands restitution be paid to his earthly victims, but in the ultimate sense the sinner can never fully repay his debt to God that the law demands. For this reason mankind is in need of a final Creation Jubilee at the end of time, where all debts to the law are cancelled purely by grace alone.

Righteous Judgment Purifies the Sinner

The more one studies God's law, particularly the spirit behind it, the more one is struck by the wisdom and love of its Author. There is no judgment without remedy. Men punish; God purifies. When men judge, they determine penalties that are invariably either too harsh or too lenient. When the great American Prison Experiment was born in 1796 with Philadelphia's first "penitentiary," the criminal was supposed to be put into solitary confinement with nothing to do but read the Bible and pray.

"Reformatories" were next set up under a slightly different theory. But a simple glance at the prison system today should suffice to tell us that they do not reform or make men penitent. Any criminals who amend their ways do so IN SPITE OF the prison system. It is a tough road, however, since they are never really forgiven, never again have equal citizenship rights, and are continually handicapped in trying to obtain employment.

Such is the fire of man's wrath. It punishes without purifying. It spends astronomical amounts of money to obtain "justice," only to destroy the sinner totally or partially.

The ancient Greek word for fire is *pur*. It is the root of a number of English words used today, such as PURGE and PURIFY. This is what the fire of God does, for it

characterizes the very nature of God and His law.

In the next chapter, we shall study the nature of the lake of fire that burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:15 and 21:8). We will see that Jesus had already kindled a fire on the earth. He came as fire with a baptism to go with it. He continues to come as fire to all who will follow Him into the crucible. And He shall yet come as fire. Even so, Lord, come quickly.

CHAPTER 3

The Lake of Fire or the Molten Sea

In our previous chapter, we established that the Fire of God describes both His divine nature and law (word), which expresses it. We saw from Isaiah 26:9 that the purpose of God's judgments (i.e., penalties for sin) was to bring the inhabitants of the world to a place where they would *learn righteousness*. We saw how the Fire of God *purifies* us, for God sits as a Refiner of gold and silver (Malachi 3:2 and 3).

Justice is never satisfied until full restitution has been paid to all the victims of injustice. It is bad enough that our civil courts seldom recompense the victims. But the civil courts ultimately reflect the will of the people. If the Church had not abandoned God's true judicial system long ago, the civil courts would not have done so either. The laws and government of a nation simply reflect the religious view of its citizens, except in cases where one nation is occupying another.

In the case of the judicial system itself, how can we expect our judges to establish justice in the courts, prescribing judgments that are *neither* too lenient nor too harsh, when the Church itself prescribes an infinite and horrible punishment upon all sinners alike, regardless of the nature of their crime? The courts are merely reflecting the values of the people.

Which is worse, to sentence a man to five years in prison for theft, or to sentence him to a torture chamber for all eternity? Civil judges today know that the punishment should vary, depending on the severity of the crime. Yet much of the Church is still influenced by the Roman logic that the purpose of punishment is to deter crime, rather than to restore justice. With this mindset, it is logical that if punishments are severe enough, law and order will be maintained, and the people will be obedient.

If they had been students of the divine law, they would have understood that the purpose of judgment is to restore the lawful order by restoring the lost property to the victim, while restoring the sinner to grace and forgiveness.

The White Throne Judgment

In Revelation 20:11-15 we are given a description of the great White Throne Judgment. John says,

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

Take note that these men are all judged on the basis of their *deeds*. We are saved by grace apart from our works, but when it comes to the judgment, those not justified by the blood of Jesus Christ are judged according to their works. God does not just lump everyone together and give them all the same judgment, as is commonly taught. We will prove this as we proceed. John continues:

¹⁴ And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

At first glance, this seems to imply that everyone receives the same judgment. But if this were so, then how could they be judged according to their deeds? The lake of fire is a general picture of the process of judgment—NOT a specific judgment in and of itself. The lake of fire is the fiery law itself, and the law consists of many different types of judgment, which fit the specific crime committed.

This is made apparent by Daniel's description of this same White Throne Judgment in Daniel 7:9 and 10.

⁹ I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, its wheels *were* a burning fire. ¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened.

What John called “the lake of fire” in the book of Revelation, Daniel describes as “*a river of fire*.” God's Throne itself is pictured as a fire, which then flows like a river out upon the people standing before Him. Very few today would describe the lake of fire as Daniel did!

The meaning is quite clear. The river, or lake of fire is God's justice being administered to the sinners. What is the nature of that justice? As always, it is defined by God's Law, for all sin is judged by the Law.

A throne is a universal symbol of *the law* by which a king rules, or judges. Thus, the “fiery Law” of Deut. 33:2 is pictured in vision form as a *fiery throne* in Daniel 7:9. They are one and the same.

Is the Fire Literal or Spiritual?

Most people would agree that the lake of fire is indeed God's judgment upon sinners. The real disagreement comes in defining the nature of that judgment, that is, the specifics of how it works out in practice. Is it a “literal” fire? Is it a “spiritual” fire? We believe it is not literal, but it is certainly of a spiritual nature, because the Law is spiritual (Romans 7:14).

All of our misunderstandings of the lake of fire would easily be solved by a study of God's Law. After all, this is the most relevant factor in this matter of judgment. Paul says in Romans 6:23, “*for the wages of sin is death*.” Ezekiel 18:20 confirms this: “*The person [“soul”] who sins will die*.”

Anyone who studies the divine law will see that *death* is the worst possible punishment that can be meted out. Even when a man was guilty of multiple murder, the maximum penalty was death. *There is no sin* worthy of being burned at the stake, much less being burned in a torture chamber for an eternity.

There were some instances where the *dead body* of the offender was to be cremated rather than buried (Joshua 7:25; Lev. 21:9). This was the most dishonorable way to die in Scripture. In the New Testament times, the bodies of such criminals were thrown into the valley of Hinnom, which was Jerusalem's city dump. It constantly burned, as even modern dumps do. In the Greek, this valley was called "*Gehenna*," and Jesus used it as a warning in Mark 9:42-50.

⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell [*gehenna*], ⁴⁸ where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Take note that the worms here are not immortal or fireproof. The city dump constantly burned, and in the places where no flame had yet reached, there were countless worms, or maggots, to consume the garbage. But there is no record that anyone was ever cast into *gehenna* as a means of torture, except in ancient times, when the Canaanites caused their children to die by fire to the god, Molech. Jeremiah speaks of this in 32:35.

³⁵ And they built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

This ungodly practice, performed in the valley of Ben-hinnom (i.e., "the son of Hinnom," or *gehenna* in Greek) was a direct result of their religious doctrine of the fiery underworld, a teaching that was well developed in Egypt, Babylon, and Canaan. The Hebrew Bible's description of the state of the dead stands in stark contrast, and the few times it does speak of fire are quite obviously symbolic.

When Jesus spoke of *gehenna*, he was simply quoting Isaiah 66:24, where the prophet speaks of the final battle at the end of the age. He closes with this description, which Jesus ascribes to *gehenna*:

²⁴ Then they shall go forth and look on THE CORPSES of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind.

This is hardly a description of eternal punishment in some spiritual torture chamber. It is very much an earthly scene, the kind we might expect to "go forth" and look upon after a disastrous war. On the other hand, it certainly is representative of the lake of fire, as we shall see. Yet there is no indication from this verse or from Jesus' quotation of it that men will be eternally tortured in *gehenna*. Torture was not a lawful biblical judgment.

Although some parallel does exist between *gehenna* (the city dump) and the lake

of fire, the valley of Ben-hinnom, or “*gehenna*,” was nothing like a *lake*. Jesus used the parallel in order to describe two things about the lake of fire: (1) the people would be outside the New Jerusalem; and (2) it would be a place of shame. Beyond this, the theme ends and only resurfaces under a different name and another kind of symbolism.

John did not call it *gehenna*, because the purpose of the literal *gehenna* did not adequately describe the fire flowing from God’s throne, nor was *gehenna* a part of the temple symbolism which was John’s primary theme throughout the book of Revelation.

The Laver, or the Molten Sea

One must always keep in mind that the book of Revelation was written by a Hebrew. He did not interpret the Old Testament from a Greek or Egyptian perspective. His focus was upon heavenly things, particularly the True Temple in heaven. The religious symbolism of the earthly temple referred only to the heavenly reality and must be viewed in that light. John views all of history as a fulfillment of prophecy displayed in the ceremonies and vessels of the temple.

In view of our present topic, we must study the laver, the place of cleansing and purification for the priests as they washed themselves (baptism), the vessels, and the sacrifices. This “water baptism” set up in the days of Moses, was itself only an earthly manifestation of the heavenly baptism, the baptism of fire.

And so, John points to the temple laver and calls it the lake of fire. In essence, as we shall see, the picture is meant to portray *the Refiner’s Fire*, complete with the cauldron of alloyed mineral and its impurities, as the Refiner begins His work.

The book of Revelation is written from the perspective of a priest who is familiar with all the rites and ceremonies that had been performed in the Temple of Jerusalem before its destruction in 70 A.D. John was apparently a former priest in Jerusalem. Of this we have evidence from a letter of Polycrates (later bishop of Ephesus, where John also ministered). His letter is preserved by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in the fourth century.

“For great luminaries sleep in Asia, and they will rise again at the last day of the advent of the Lord . . . And there is also John, who leaned on the Lord’s breast, who was a priest wearing the mitre, and martyr and teacher, and he sleeps at Ephesus.” (*Eccl. Hist.*, III, xxxi)

A footnote explains that the word “mitre” here is *petalon*, which is used in the Septuagint of the high priest’s diadem, but what it means here has never been discovered. For some strange reason, Eusebius again quotes Polycrates in Vol. V, ch.13, where he uses the term “breastplate,” rather than mitre. Whatever the case, it is clear that John wrote from the perspective of a priest and may have been revered as a sort of “high priest” of the Church in Ephesus.

Both the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon used water in their lavers, rather than molten gold. Yet the water was meant to portray molten gold. Gold is the divine nature, and so the laver itself would portray God’s refining process. In our fleshly state, we could not survive a baptism of fiery gold, and so water baptism became the substitute and type of the true baptism of fire.

In the days of Solomon’s Temple, the laver was called “the molten sea” (1 Kings 7:23). When gold has been refined to its absolutely pure state, molten gold is as clear as

crystal. If Solomon would have filled the Temple's laver with pure gold and melted it, it would have looked like "*a sea of glass like crystal*" (Rev. 4:6). In Revelation 15:2 John described it as "*a sea of glass mixed with fire.*"

What John saw in heaven was the laver, the *lake of fire*, as pictured in the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon. The laver was used to wash (baptize) in order to be cleansed, or purified ceremonially. The purpose of the law was to teach righteousness to the inhabitants of the world. The purpose of fire is to purify. So it does not strain our imagination in the least to consider both the laver and the lake of fire to be for the purpose of divine purification, rather than a place where men are tortured forever.

The lake of fire is portrayed in Scripture as the final place where the great Refiner sits to purify the hearts of men and prepare them to dwell in the divine presence in fellowship with God. This is the true purpose of the laver. At present only the true priests of God and of Christ (Rev. 20:6), that is, Christians in this present age, have access to that great laver. Even as the Levitical priests of the Old Testament purified themselves daily at the laver, so also are we baptized to signify that God has purified our hearts. In that final Age, the Lake of Fire shall be applied universally to those in need of purification.

Fire and Brimstone

There are some who argue that the fire must be a literal place of burning and torture, because it is often associated with "brimstone." Revelation 21:8 says,

⁸ But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Does the "brimstone" prove that this is a literal fire that tortures men? Actually, the very opposite is true. Brimstone is sulphur, as any concordance will show. The original Greek word for sulphur, or "brimstone," is *theion*. Its root is *theo*, which is the same word usually translated "God." (Note: Theology is the study of God.)

Sulphur, or *theion*, was considered to be sacred to the ancient Greeks. It was used to consecrate for divine service, to PURIFY, and to cleanse. They used it in religious rites to purify their temples. They would even rub it on their bodies to signify consecration to God. In its verb form the word *theou* means "to hallow, make divine, or to dedicate to God."

And so, to a Greek reader, a lake of fire and brimstone (sulphur) would signify a *lake of divine purification or consecration to God*. Consequently, in Virgil's classic Greek epic, The Aeneid, 741-742, 745-747) we read:

"Therefore we souls are *trained with punishment*
And pay with suffering for old felonies--
Some are hung up helpless to the winds;
The stain of sin is *cleansed* for others of us
In the trough of a huge whirlpool, or *with fire*
Burned out of us—each one of us we suffer
The afterworld we deserve."

This “fire and sulphur,” taken symbolically by the more educated or by the higher degrees of religion, was only literalized by the uneducated. The priests generally allowed them to be deceived, of course, because they also believed that fear of fire was a good religious motivator.

The early Christian Church of the first few centuries after Christ knew this. This is shown by their writings. Unfortunately, some also believed in “the doctrine of Reserve.” That is, they would withhold some teachings from the novices until they were mature Christians. They did this specifically with the teaching on the lake of fire, allowing novices to take their words literally, rather than spiritually, so that they would be better motivated to turn to Christ.

Exactly how much this contributed to the rise of hellfire teaching is hard to say, but it certainly was a factor. They may have justified such a practice in their minds, but with our modern 20/20 hindsight we can see where it led the Church in later years.

The Early Church's Teaching on Fire

The essential view that we will present here was held by most of the early Christian Church as well. In support of this statement, we shall endeavor to present to the reader a few samples from the most influential of the Christian leaders in the first few centuries. Our purpose is to show that our view is not strange or out of step with at least most of the early Church fathers.

1. Clement of Alexandria (150-213 A.D.)

Clement's full Latin name was Titus Flavius Clemens and was related in some way to the Roman Emperors, though it is not known just how. He was born in Athens and later moved to Alexandria, the hub of Greek culture and religion. Being very well educated, he started a Christian school there, with the aim of explaining Christ to the Greek world. He also wrote a book called *Miscellanies*, in which “*the task Clement had set himself was to make a summary of Christian knowledge up to his time*” (Donald Attwater, *Saints of the East*, p. 37).

As we saw in Chapter Two, Clement believed the fire to be an instrument of God leading to conversion. He considered the Greek idea of fire to be far more scriptural than the Egyptian view, which one writer described as follows:

“The Egyptian Hell was particularly impressive and highly refined . . . Confinement and imprisonment played an important role. The tortures were bloody, and punishment by fire was frequent and terrifying. . . . When it came to the topography of Hell, the Egyptian imagination knew no limits . . . Intermediate states or phases in the other-worldly process of purification did not exist.” (Jacques de Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, pp. 19, 20)

On the other hand, the Platonic Greek view had some remarkable likenesses to the Hebrew view. The above author attributes Clement's view on purification to Plato, who in turn got it from Virgil and other early Greek poets. However, the view of fire as a lawful cleanser from sin, rather than a means of torture, is well established in the Old Testament as well as the New. Jacques de Goff continues by writing on page 53,

“From the Old Testament, Clement and Origen took the notion that fire is a divine instrument, and from the New Testament the idea of baptism by fire (from the Gospels) and the idea of a purificatory trial after death (from Paul).”

In Clement's own words, he says plainly:

"God does not wreak vengeance, for vengeance is to return evil for evil, and God punishes only with an eye to the good." (*Stromata*, 7, 26)

Clement headed the Christian school of thought in Alexandria from 190-203 A.D. He had to flee for his life during the persecution of Severus in 203, and he spent his remaining years teaching in Antioch and Palestine. And so his most brilliant student in Alexandria took his place as head of the school. His name was Origen.

2. Origen of Alexandria (180-253 A.D.)

Like his predecessor, Origen was not the bishop of the city, and yet he was by far the most influential Christian for the next century. He was the first to write a systematic theological commentary on the whole Bible. He took great pains to learn Hebrew, not only that he might better argue the case for Christianity among the Judeans, but also that he might correct some of the mistranslations of the Septuagint Greek version.

Around 230 A.D. he visited Antioch, Caesarea, and Jerusalem, and though he was only a presbyter (not even a priest), he was asked to speak from the pulpit. He accepted. When Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria back home, heard of it, he was filled with envy and rage, demanding that he cease immediately and return to Alexandria. Origen meekly returned, and the incident was forgotten.

A few years later, Origen again went on the same trip and was this time prevailed upon to be ordained a priest, so he could teach from the pulpit. He accepted. When Demetrius heard of it, he was again filled with rage and envy. Origen was excommunicated from Alexandria on the grounds that he had emasculated himself in his youth and was therefore not allowed to preach from the pulpit. (Origen had taken Jesus' words in Matt. 19:12 a bit too literally in his youthful zeal, but had repented of it afterward.) Demetrius quoted Deut. 23:1 to support his case, although he had never raised the issue in the 20 years prior to that time. Yet the bishop of Rome at the time agreed with the verdict, though none of the other Palestinian or Greek churches did. Soon the issue died down and was forgotten for another 150 years.

And so Origen spent the last twenty years of his life in Palestine, where a wealthy patron hired six secretaries to help him write his books. His writings were the most influential in the whole Greek world, though he was relatively unknown in the Latin West. In his book, *Against Celsus* IV, 13 Origen continues the teaching of Clement by writing:

"The Sacred Scripture does, indeed, call our God "a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29), and says that "rivers of fire go before His face: (Dan. 7:10), and that "He shall come as a refiner's fire and purify the people" (Mal. 3:2,3). As therefore, God is a consuming fire, *what is it that is to be consumed by Him?* We say it is wickedness, and whatever proceeds from it, such as is figuratively called "wood, hay, and stubble" (1 Cor. 3:12-15) which denote the evil works of man. Our God is a consuming fire in this sense; and He shall come as a refiner's fire to purify rational nature from the alloy of wickedness and other impure matter which has adulterated the intellectual gold and silver; consuming whatever evil is admixed in all the soul."

We dealt with the topic of the Great White Throne Judgment earlier. In his book *On Prayer* XXIX, 15 Origen further writes:

“They are purged with the “wise fire” or made to pay in prison every debt up to the last farthing . . . to cleanse them from the evils committed in their error . . . Thus they are delivered from all the filth and blood with which they had been so filthied and defiled that they could not even think about being saved from their own perdition . . .”

The teachings of Clement and Origen were NOT unusual. The basic view of the divine Fire restoring sinners was the majority opinion for many centuries in the Greek-speaking Christian Church. Unfortunately, many in the Latin Church of the West did not read the Scriptures in their Greek original, but only had a very inferior Old Latin version which Jerome eventually re-translated as the Latin Vulgate. And so the Latin West did not set the theological tone for the Church until Augustine in 400 A.D.

3. Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 A.D.)

St. Gregory was well educated in Alexandria and Athens. Having a call to the ministry, he went to Pontus with St. Basil, where the two compiled a collection of the writings of Origen, called Philokalia, or “Love of the Beautiful.” Gregory was a quiet man, a perpetual student, the kind of person who spent his whole life studying, having no desire to make a name for himself. However, the people would not allow this. In 361 Gregory was forcibly seized by the people and compelled to become ordained as a priest. So much for the quiet life.

He then pastored the church at Sasima, a village in Cappadocia. For a few months Gregory was also bishop of Constantinople, where it is said he accomplished more in a few months there than in twenty years in Caesarea. Gregory was one of the four Eastern Doctors of the Church. In addition to that, according to Robert Payne:

“Of all the Fathers of the Church, he was the only one to be granted after his death the title “Theologian,” which until this time was reserved for an apostle -- John of Patmos.”
(The Fathers of the Eastern Church, p. 179)

I include these credentials to show that this was no insignificant, back-woods, self-styled pastor. Nor was he an ambitious, self-aggrandizing leader as many were in his day. Gregory of Nazianzus was one of the most prominent Christian leaders of his day and well loved for the fruit of the Spirit, which he manifested daily and consistently. In fact, this red-haired Cappodocian had quite a sense of humor and was the only one who was known to have ever dared to laugh at his friend Basil, who was very stern and austere, the father of Eastern monasticism. At any rate, Gregory wrote this about the lake of fire:

“These (apostates), if they will, may go our way, which indeed is Christ’s; but if not, let them go their own way. In another place perhaps they shall be *baptized with fire, that last baptism*, which is not only very painful, but enduring also; which eats up, as if it were hay, all defiled matter, and consumes all vanity and vice.” (Orat. XXXIX, 19)

Thus, he calls the lake of fire a “baptism” whose purpose is to “consume all vanity and vice.” He does say it is “very painful,” but then, I often find that laver baptism very painful myself. Yet I submit to it, because I know it is God’s method of purification.

4. Gregory of Nyassa (335-394 A.D.)

St. Basil, the dear friend of Gregory of Nazianzus, had a younger brother also

named Gregory. He was a bishop of Nyassa in Cappadocia. Robert Payne writes of him:

“The Emperor Theodosius had recognized him as the supreme authority in all matters of theological orthodoxy, and . . . he was treated with extraordinary respect.” (Robert Payne, The Fathers of the Eastern Church, p. 164)

Again, the same historian says:

“Of the three Cappadocian Fathers Gregory of Nyassa is the one closest to us, the least proud, the most subtle, the one most committed to the magnificence of man. That strange, simple, happy, unhappy, intelligent, and God-tormented man was possessed by angels . . . He employed all those resources of Greek philosophy to help him in his task . . . In Eastern Christianity his Great Catechism follows immediately after Origen’s On First Principles. These were the two seminal works, close-woven, astonishingly lucid, final . . . Athanasius was the hammer, Basil the stern commander, Gregory of Nazianzus the tormented singer, and it was left to Gregory of Nyassa to be the man enchanted with Christ . . . Four hundred years after his death, at the Seventh General Council held in A.D. 787, the assembled princes of the Church granted him a title which exceeded in their eyes all the other titles granted to men: he was called “Father of Fathers.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 168, 169)

This was an ironic twist of history, for that same council also pronounced a curse upon all who taught that the fire of God would cleanse, rather than torture men for eternity! One might think that perhaps Gregory was out of step with mainstream Christian thought for believing and teaching the restoration of all mankind, but Funk & Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia says of him,

“Gregory’s religious position was strictly orthodox” (i.e., mainstream Christianity in his day).

In fact, he was called “*the bulwark of the church against heresy*,” taking part in the Council of Nicea and other later Church Councils. In his book De Anima et Resurrectione, he wrote about the nature of the second death:

“They who live in the flesh ought, by virtuous conversation, to free themselves from fleshly lusts, lest after death, they should again need *another death to cleanse away the remains of fleshly vice* that cling to them.”

In another book, Orat. In 1 Cor. 15:28, he wrote:

“When all the alloy of evil that has been mixed up in the things that are, having been *separated by the refining action of the cleansing fire*, everything that was created by God shall have become such as it was at the beginning, when as yet it had not admitted evil . . . this is the end of our hope, that nothing shall be left contrary to the good, but that the Divine Life, penetrating all things shall absolutely destroy Death from among the things that are; *sin having been destroyed before him*, by means of which, as has been said death held his dominion over men.”

These are just a few of the writings of the early Church leaders. It is well known by those who have studied early Church writings, this was the majority view. In fact, it was practically the ONLY VIEW for the first few centuries after Christ and the apostles. The early Church had quite a number of doctrinal disputes, but this issue was NOT EVEN DISPUTED. In fact, it was taught by all the major theologians of the day in the churches that the Apostle Paul founded.

Six Schools of Christian Learning

There were six Christian theological schools of thought known to have existed in

the first few centuries. The first and earliest was in Alexandria, where Clement, Origen, and others clearly taught that sinners are purged by the lake of fire. The theological school at Caesaria in Palestine was next. The writings of both Origen and Clement were highly esteemed there, and Origen actually lived there during his most productive years.

The school of Antioch, which had its feet more firmly planted on the ground, disputed with Origen over his allegorical method of interpretation, but they agreed wholeheartedly with his view on the “lake of fire.” The same with the school founded at Edessa in the fifth century.

It was only the Latin school (based in Carthage, but which included Rome) that taught the doctrine of endless punishment. Augustine, the “champion” of endless torments, wrote that there were:

“ . . . indeed VERY MANY (who) . . . do not believe that such things will be. Not that they would go counter to divine Scripture.” (*Enchiridion*, 112)

Augustine was the most influential of the Latin Church fathers. He was a teacher of Rhetoric first in Carthage and later in Milan, Italy, where he was converted. He then retired from teaching and moved back to North Africa, where he was soon ordained as a priest and later as the bishop of the town of Hippo.

Before his conversion in 386 A.D. Augustine had been of the sect of the Manichees for nine years. This was to be both an asset and a liability to him in later years. It was an asset in that the Manichees had been fond of quoting Paul’s views on predestination, which happened to agree with their eastern philosophy. Augustine was to become virtually the first Christian bishop (that we know of) since the Apostle Paul to teach the doctrine of predestination.

On the other hand, the Manichees had also instilled in Augustine the idea that the end of all things, the goal of history, was a final separation of the kingdom of Light from the kingdom of Darkness. He incorporated this teaching more fully than any before him in his idea that eventually all sinners would be separated from all the righteous, and that they would eternally exist in that sinful state. Most of the Church before him, particularly in the East, had taught that one day evil and darkness would cease to exist, that God may be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). We shall explain this more fully in our next chapters.

Augustine’s rigorous views stated that God had predestined a few for salvation but for most to be tormented eternally. His view of predestination was later toned down by the Roman Church, in order to accommodate fully the view of eternal torment without portraying God to be overly unjust. These are topics that we will deal with fully in a later chapter as well.

The Manichean sect was founded around 240 A.D. by a Persian named Mani. It was a cross between Persian, Dualism, Buddhism and Christianity. From Persia they adopted the idea that good and evil were both eternal forces, or kingdoms. They were said to be of equal strength, although each would ebb and flow at various times. At present the light and darkness were mixed, and the goal of history was to separate them by a wall. Yet evil would always exist, they said, because it was eternal and therefore just as powerful as good.

Bishop Archelaus in 277 A.D. wrote a book against the Manicheans called The

Acts of the Disputation with Mani the Heretic. He argued against Manicheanism (and thus also against Augustine) by proving that one day all evil—including death itself—would cease to exist (1 Cor. 15:25,26).

Titus, bishop of Bostra, also wrote a book around 364 A.D. entitled, Against Manicheans, where he said,

“The punishments of God are Holy, as they are remedial and salutary in their effect upon transgressors; for they are inflicted, *not to preserve them in their wickedness*, but to make them cease from their sins. The abyss . . . is indeed the place of punishment, but *it is not endless*. The anguish of their sufferings compels them to break off from their sins.”

Augustine’s theological opponents all argued against his views on the grounds that he had gotten his theology from the Manicheans. Some of these charges are true, others are not. It is clear, however, that the nine years he spent as a Manichee oriented him to think more deeply in areas that the Church had not thought of before that time. It depends upon one’s point of view as to whether Augustine was justified in his various views. From our perspective, we note only that his City of God ends with the final separation of good and evil, light and darkness, and that both are eternally preserved in their respective places. Augustine would certainly not have come to this conclusion on his own; he really did get it from the Manichees.

One other very influential theologian was Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428). He asked, “*Who is so great a fool*” as to believe that God would resurrect men merely to destroy them forever with torments? (Fragment IV)

During the Dark Ages, when the doctrine of eternal torment was “orthodox” in Europe, its judicial shadow came with it—burning people at the stake. It was argued that God was going to throw them into an endless torment of fire anyway, so the Church was only initiating it a few insignificant years early. Besides, such “justice” served to instill fear into the hearts of people of going against the Church in any way—not only to avoid the stake, but to avoid the burning hell.

This tactic was certainly effective; no one can argue that point. But if one has opportunity to study the divine justice of Bible Law, it soon becomes apparent that such punishment is of heathen origin, rather than of the Bible. In every nation, the popular belief about divine justice has always served as a model for the justice of man. In the Dark Ages, they thought they were imitating God; in reality, however, they were imitating the heathen who burned their children to Molech in the valley of Ben-hinnom.

In Chapter Four we will show biblically that the Greek and Hebrew words for “eternal” and “everlasting” are mistranslations brought in through the Latin Vulgate around 400 A.D. Then we will deal with the more positive subject of God’s great Restoration.

CHAPTER 4

Does God Punish Endlessly?

In this chapter we will attempt to prove from plain Scripture that God's punishments are NOT endless. The English translations which use the term "eternal" and "everlasting" in relation to both divine punishment and life in the coming age are actually mistranslations of the original Hebrew and Greek. Furthermore, these incorrect translations do away with the Hebrew concept of the Kingdom Age, the Messianic Age, or as it is usually called in the Bible, "The Age."

There are at least three good literal translations that are very accurate in their rendering of the Hebrew word, *olam*, and the Greek word, *aion*. Rotherham's The Emphasized Bible and Young's Literal Translation use the terms "age-abiding," "age-enduring," and "age-lasting," rather than eternal or everlasting. The Concordant Version prefers to leave it as *eonian*, since our English word "eon" means "an age," and the English language has simply borrowed the word "eon" from the Greeks. At least two of these versions are readily available in most Christian bookstores, so we will not belabor the point further.

Some do not like to use the term, Kingdom Age, since it implies that the Kingdom does not exist today. For this reason, I prefer to use the term, Tabernacles Age, since this term conveys the idea of the third stage of Kingdom development.

"Everlasting" in the Old Testament

Whenever our English versions use the term "everlasting" or "eternal" in the Old Testament, it is normally from the original Hebrew word, *olam*. This word means "to hide, keep secret, obscure." It is best expressed by the English word, "obscurity." In actual usage, the word refers to an INDEFINITE period of time, but NOT eternal. It is simply AN AGE. The end of that age is obscure and generally unknown, but not endless.

For example, in Jonah 2:6, the prophet prays for deliverance out of the belly of the great fish. He says:

⁶ I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever [*olam*], But Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.

Did Jonah remain in the belly of the fish for eternity? Obviously not, or he would have been recycled fish bait many times over. In the darkness he had no concept of time, and so those three days and nights are described as being *olam*, an obscure amount of time.

Another example where *olam* is clearly a limited period of time, or an age, is found in Exodus 21:6. It specifies that a servant may serve his master "for ever" (*olam*). This is not for eternity, but only for the remaining life time of the servant. No one could know how long the servant would remain alive, so the amount of time was indefinite, or

obscure.

One very interesting verse is Psalm 45:6. It shows that there is time AFTER *olam*. This proves beyond doubt that *olam* itself cannot refer to eternity, because when the Psalmist wished to express eternity, he had to say “*olam va ad*,” or “the age and beyond.”

⁶ Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever [*olam va ad*, “the age and beyond”]; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.

There are many other examples where *olam* is obviously a limited period of time, but we do not wish to bore the reader unduly. We shall simply list a few from the Psalms in the event that some readers may wish to study this further: Psalm 78:66; 79:13; 86:12; 89:1; 110:4; 112:6; 115:8.

“Everlasting” in the New Testament

The New Testament books were written in Greek or, in some cases, in Aramaic and then immediately translated by the authors into Greek. The New Testament authors often quote verses from the Old Testament, and when they do, they usually quote from the Septuagint. This was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that was used widely during the time of Christ and the Apostles.

In Hebrews 1:8 the author quotes from Psalm 45:6. In this verse, *olam* is rendered by the Greek word *aion*. Compare also Hebrews 5:6 and Psalm 110:4. This is the closest Greek equivalent and therefore was used in the Septuagint. And so we can safely say that *aion* is meant to convey the same meaning as the Hebrew concept of *olam*.

But what about the Greek word itself? Does *aion* really mean an age, or a limited period of time? Yes, it does. It does not really carry the idea of “obscurity,” but like *olam*, means an age, or eon.

Let us prove this. One of the most obvious New Testament passages where *aion* refers to an age is found in Matthew 13, where Jesus interprets His own parables. In order to show the contrast between *aion* and *kosmos*, we will begin with verse 38.

³⁸ And the field is the world [*kosmos*]; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age [*aion*]; and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ "Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age [*aion*].

The King James Version says “the end of the WORLD,” but most reference Bibles have a marginal reference to explain that verses 39 and 40 should read “AGE,” rather than “world.” How do they know? Simply because the Greek word is *aion*, rather than *kosmos*. All translators know that *aion* refers to an age, including the New American Standard, which we quoted above. It is a reference to a limited period of TIME.

Ages have both a beginning and an end. Hebrews 11:3 tells us that ages have beginning points:

³ By faith we understand that the worlds [*aionas*, “ages”] were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out

of things which are visible.

The NASV above mistranslated *aionas* in this instance. *Aionas* is simply the plural of *aion* in the Greek. It says God “framed” the ages; therefore, ages had a beginning. This is witnessed also by Hebrews 1:2.

² In these last days has spoken to us in *His Son*, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world [*aionas*, “ages”].

We know that Jesus Christ (the Logos of John 1:1) did indeed create the world, but this is not what the author of Hebrews was telling us. He was informing us that Jesus created the ages of time. Time simply did not exist before creation. Time is a created thing, just like space. In fact, Paul makes reference to a promise of God that He made BEFORE time began. It is found in Titus 1:2.

² In the hope of eternal [*aionian*] life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago [*pro chronon aionion*, “before the ages began”].

It is truly unfortunate that the NASV translators did not understand the doctrine of the ages. If they had rendered the passage as it reads, rather than trying to interpret it by their own understanding, it would be easier for the average reader to see how God created time and divided it into various ages. Here is where a more literal translation would be helpful. For example, Young’s Literal Translation of Titus 1:2 reads,

² upon hope of life *age-enduring*, which God, who doth not lie, did promise before *times of ages*.

Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible renders this verse,

² In hope of life *age-abiding*; which God who cannot lie promised before *age-during times*.

These renderings are more accurate, even though they are a little more difficult to read because they are so literal. Easy-reading versions such as the NASV certainly have their place in modern society, but the serious Bible student should also have a literal translation at his or her disposal in order to filter out the translator’s bias.

“Eternal Life” or Life in the Age?

Titus 1:2 (above) also makes reference to God’s promise to us, which is the hope of *aionian* life. Many have assumed that this is a reference to immortality itself, and this is why it so often rendered “eternal life.” But strictly speaking, this is not so. *Aionian* life is a specific promise of immortality IN THE TABERNACLES AGE, given to those who inherit Life in the first resurrection. As we saw in Chapter One, a few believers will inherit life at the first resurrection; but most believers will have to wait for the general resurrection. Paul makes reference to the first resurrection in Phil. 3:11-14.

¹⁰ That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection [*exanastasis*] from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself

as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the *upward call of God* in Christ Jesus.

The “*upward call of God*” that Paul speaks of in Philippians 3:14 is to receive Life in the first resurrection at the beginning of the Tabernacles, NOT at the general resurrection, at the end of the thousand years.

How do we know this? Because in Philippians 3:11 Paul describes this higher calling as being the “out-resurrection” (*exanastasis*). It is the only time in the entire New Testament that Paul puts an “ex” in front of the usual word for resurrection (*anastasis*). It is his way of differentiating this greater resurrection from the general resurrection.

The Greek word translated “upward” in the NASV above is *ano*. It means high, upward, or above. When the word is used of countries, it means inland, or up from the coast. When the word is used of time, it means FORMER, or formerly. And so, when Paul uses the term to describe the prize of the UPWARD (high) calling of God, he is most likely telling us that there are two resurrections: the former and the latter, or the first and the general resurrection. The prize is to attain to the former, or first resurrection.

All through the New Testament we find countless references to “eternal life.” Yes, of course we will inherit eternal life, or immortality. But the thrust of this phrase is to show us a better resurrection, wherein we may inherit life during the Tabernacles Age PRIOR TO the time of the new heavens and the new earth.

We should understand the Scriptures through Hebrew eyes, not through our modern English eyes. In the Hebrew concept, it was correctly believed that we would be resurrected at the beginning of the Tabernacles Age. The Messiah would come to rule that Kingdom, and His people would rule with Him. In other words, they would be given *aionian* life, “Age-abiding life,” or life pertaining specifically to the Tabernacles Age.

I have found no evidence that the prophets knew clearly of more than one resurrection back in the Old Testament era, any more than they knew there would be a Pentecostal Age before the Tabernacles Age. This was something that was to be revealed with Jesus and the Apostles. And when they did reveal it, they made it clear (as we saw in Chapter One) that those who attain to that high calling would be given life 1,000 years BEFORE the rest of the believers.

Consequently, we find references like Luke 12:46 which appears to teach that believers (“servants”) who do not watch for His coming will not inherit “eternal life.” In reality, it merely says that such people will not inherit the first resurrection. They will not have the privilege of ruling with Christ in immortality and incorruption during the Tabernacles Age. And so we are everywhere exhorted to strive to inherit *aionian* life, which is the real prize (Phil. 3:14).

Jesus Will Reign for the Ages of the Ages

In Luke 1:33 we find that “OF His kingdom there shall be **NO END**.” If Luke had used the term *aionian* here, he would have been incorrect. The things OF the kingdom shall truly be everlasting, not age-lasting. But Jesus’ reign lasts only until all enemies are subdued, including death itself (1 Cor. 15:25-28). At that point the Kingdom

is turned over to the Father, and the perfected universe enters a timeless realm of which we know little.

In Hebrews 7:16 the writer refers to Jesus' coming "*according to the power of an indestructible life.*" The Greek word translated "indestructible" is *akatalutos*, which means "indissoluble, not subject to destruction." The King James Version translates it "endless," which is also accurate. He would have been wrong if he had said Jesus only had *aionian* life. So he chose his words carefully.

In 1 Timothy 1:17 we are told that Jesus is the King of the Ages. That is, He is the rightful Ruler of the earth who shall reign during the final two ages of time. There is first the Tabernacles Age, which culminates the plan of God in the present world-order, followed by the Age of the New Heavens and the New Earth. These are the ages of the ages, or the ages to come.

After the 7th thousand-year period (Sabbath millennium), God will kindle the lake of fire to purify the wicked. The believers will simply receive "few stripes" or "many stripes," up to 40, according to Bible law (Deut. 25:1-3). God prohibits beatings of more than 40 stripes. Why?

¹ If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, ² then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. ³ "He may beat him forty times *but* no more, lest he beat him with many more stripes than these, and your brother *be degraded* in your eyes.

God's judgments are carefully measured in order to prevent us from being "degraded." They correct us, rather than destroy us. This is true for both believers and unbelievers, for it is the same law that is used for all lawbreakers. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:17:

¹⁷ Now to the King eternal [ton aionion, "of the ages"], immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever [aionas ton aionon, "ages of the ages"]. Amen.

The way this verse is usually translated leads most people to believe that Paul was informing us of God's "eternal" existence. God is, of course, "eternal." No one disputes that, for it is always assumed. But Paul is bringing out another aspect of God's character and position. He is the "*King of the Ages*" and shall rule in the final glorious ages of the earth. It says that He shall reign "*for the Ages of the Ages.*"

The Greek phrase (see above) is *aionas ton aionos*. The word, *ton*, means "of-the." It NEVER means "and." Dr. Young translates the above verse correctly and literally:

¹⁷ And to the *King of the Ages*, the incorruptible, invisible, only wise God, is honour and glory—to *the ages of the ages*! Amen.

If we stop and think about it, the phrase "ever and ever" really makes no sense, because it implies that it is longer than a mere "ever." Some translators do a song-and-

dance routine, attempting to show that the phrase is an idiom meaning “forever and ever.” They say it signifies ages tumbling upon ages. If that were the case, then Holy of Holies ought to be idiomatic of “Holy AND Holies.” The Song of Songs should then be idiomatic for “Song AND Songs.” Or perhaps we should say that the Holy of Holies is a Holy Place tumbling upon countless other holy places. The Song of Songs should be a Song with an infinite number of stanzas.

No, the Bible talks about the MOST Holy Place and the GREATEST Song and the GREATEST of the Ages.

Jerome's Latin Vulgate

The early Church was mainly divided between Greek and Latin culture and language. We read from secular histories that the Roman Empire had conquered the Greek-speaking world shortly before Christ's birth. The Romans borrowed a great deal from the Greeks, but the language and cultural barrier always remained in place. The thinking was just plain different.

The Greek philosophers were mostly concerned with the perfect (ideal) man. The Romans were mostly concerned with a perfect government. The Greeks pursued the ideal man by studying virtue and beauty; the Romans pursued their perfect government by studying law and order.

These differences surfaced in the early Church as well. Both cultures had a tendency to interpret the Bible through the colored glasses of their own cultures. As time went on, they got farther and farther away from the Hebrew perspective. And so both Greeks and Romans had their own unique shortcomings and blind spots, even as we do today in our own cultures.

The blind spot of the Latin Christians was their belief that in order to maintain law and order, it was necessary to threaten men with the worst possible tortures in the afterlife. This obsession with maintaining law and order appears to have been a motivating force behind the Latin idea of God's eternal retribution upon sinners.

I do not know when the Old Latin version of the Bible was translated for the benefit of the Romans. It was not a good translation by any scholar's standard. But finally, a scholar arose who was well qualified to revise the old version. His name was Jerome.

Jerome was born in 347 A.D. in Italy. His parents were wealthy Christians who sent him to Rome for a secular education. After his studies he was baptized in the Church at the age of 19. When he decided upon the monastic life, his parents opposed it, and he had a falling out with them. Having a bad temper, Jerome never saw them again, nor did he ever mention them again in his writings.

In 373 A.D. when Jerome was in his mid-twenties, he went East, because the Greek world was the land of education and higher theological learning. He met Evagrius in Antioch and began learning the Greek language. Later he also learned Hebrew thoroughly.

From 379 to 382 he lived in Constantinople, where he met Gregory of Nyassa. He also took Gregory of Nazianzus as his “teacher.” Jerome began reading all the writings of

Origen as well as others that were recommended to him. When he re-translated the Latin Bible in 390-406 A.D., he wrote in the preface an appreciation to Origen, who had done much translation work as well. (Jerome also lived in Alexandria for a time. This was Origen's home town.) Finally, he settled in Bethlehem, where he headed a monastery for the remaining years of his life.

It is unfortunate that Jerome's personality was so vindictive and unforgiving. He was truly one of the best Christian scholars of the day and was admired for this; but his poisoned pen made people very cautious so as not to offend him in any way. His senseless attacks on Pelagius finally resulted in his Bethlehem monastery being burned to the ground in 416 A.D. Jerome died on September 30, 420 A.D.

As for the Latin Vulgate, Jerome did an excellent job over all. His translation became a classic that has been used ever since. However, we must confine our remarks here to the subject of "eternal" and "everlasting," because it is through the Latin Vulgate that we inherited these words in the English Bible.

When Jerome came to the Greek word *aionian* ("age-lasting"), he had two Latin words to choose from in its translation: *seculum* and *aeternum*. Both of these words had already been used in the Old Latin version that he was correcting. And, in fact, these words were quite close in meaning to the Greek *aionian*. And so Jerome used both words interchangeably.

There was just one problem. The Latin words had a DOUBLE MEANING. According to a footnote in Augustine's *City of God*, XXII, I, we read,

"The words 'eternal' and 'eternity' from Latin *aeternus*, *aeternitas*, are related to *aevum*, which means BOTH 'unending time' and 'a period of time;' for the second meaning the commoner word is *aetas*."

This footnote was put in by modern Latin scholars to clarify the Latin terminology, because Augustine was attempting to prove that *aeternus* and *aeternitas* in his Latin Bible was unending time. Recall the verse we quoted earlier, Psalm 45:6,

⁶ Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever [*olam va ad*, "the age and beyond"]; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.

Jerome translated this phrase to read in Latin: *in aeternum et ultra*, ("into eternity and beyond"). It is obvious that Jerome knew that *aeternum* referred to a limited period of time, an age, rather than "eternity" as we know it today, for there is nothing beyond eternity.

At any rate, Jerome used both *seculum* and *aeternus* in the Latin Vulgate. Twelve hundred years later, the King James translators simply followed the Vulgate in their rendering of these words. Whenever the Vulgate said *aeternus*, the KJV said "eternal;" whenever the Vulgate said *seculum*, the KJV reads "world." This is why the KJV in Matthew 13:39 and 40 reads "the end of the WORLD" instead of "the end of the age." Our modern word, secular, means "pertaining to this world-order, or to this age."

It is not that Jerome's translation was incorrect. His words were technically accurate. The problem was that they apparently had a double meaning, and that Augustine chose the wrong meaning to champion eternal torment. Latin scholars were thus compelled to point out his bias.

Augustine's Argument in his Book, City of God

The book, City of God, was actually a series of books written from 412 until his death in 430. When Alaric the Goth sacked Rome in 410 A.D. it was an embarrassment to the Christian Church that needed an explanation. After all, it had been contended that such an event could never happen, now that Christian Emperors ruled Rome. It was supposed that God would defend Rome from the pagan invaders. The pagans in Rome, on the other hand, had prophesied the fall of Rome, now that the pagan gods were no longer being supported by the state. And so Latin Christians looked to Augustine to explain how this could happen. This was why he began to write his book two years later in 412 A.D.

Augustine essentially wrote that all men are divided into two spiritual cities: Babylon and Jerusalem. Rome itself was therefore not the issue, because some Romans were of Babylon and some of Jerusalem, the City of God. He argued that at the end of history, all citizens of each city would be separated by God. Most would go to hell for eternity; a few would go to heaven for eternity.

In the latter part of the series, particularly Book 21, he attempted to prove that the punishment of the wicked is “eternal,” that is, endless. To do so, he used much philosophical reasoning and quotations from Cicero, the Roman lawyer. (See Appendix 1.) Beyond that, his only real “proof” is his interpretation of Matthew 25:46, which he discusses as follows in, City of God, XXI, xxiii.

“For Christ said in the very same place, including both in one and the same sentence: “So these will go into *eternal* punishment, but the righteous into *eternal* life.” If both are eternal, then surely both must be understood as “long,” but having an end, or else as “everlasting” without an end. For they are matched with each other. In one clause eternal punishment, in the other eternal life. (To say) “Eternal life shall be without end, (but) eternal punishment will have an end” is utterly absurd. Hence, since the eternal life of the saints will be without end, eternal punishment also will surely have no end, for those whose lot it is.”

Augustine seems totally ignorant of two things: (1) the Greek word *aionian* did NOT have a double meaning, as did the Latin; and (2) the Hebrew concept of “The Age.”

Matthew 25:46 actually is teaching that the wicked will go into divine chastening that is *aionian* (for or during the AGE). The righteous, on the other hand, will be resurrected to life *aionian* (for or during The Age).

In the Gospels Jesus specifically taught on two distinct resurrections. Luke 14:14 tells us about “*the resurrection of the just*,” where the righteous will be rewarded. In John 5:28 and 29 Jesus tells us about the resurrection of both the just and unjust.

The interim between these two resurrections defines “The Age.” Those who are raised in the resurrection of the just will receive life in The Age; i.e., *aionian* life. It is a special reward for certain Christians called to rule with Christ. They will receive life a thousand years before their fellow Christians.

It does NOT mean that their reward must end with that age. God does not plan to take back immortality from them.

Likewise, when Jesus speaks of the wicked or the unjust receiving *aionian*

judgment, He is once again showing us that their judgment is limited to a specific age. It has both a beginning and an end. Judgment is not perpetual without hope of restoration. The book of Revelation shows that this age of judgment follows the great White Throne Judgment at the end of the thousand-year Tabernacles Age.

And so, the *aionian* life reward of those who rule with Christ a thousand years will commence at the first resurrection and end with the second. The *aionian* judgment of the unjust will commence with the second resurrection and end with the great Jubilee at the end of time, after all things have been put under the feet of Christ.

Consequently, Augustine's argument that *aionian* life and *aionian* judgment must both be equal is absolutely correct. The problem arises when he tries to show that both are unending, when, in fact, *both pertain to an age*. He plays upon the average Christian's ignorance of Greek. Secondly, he exploits one's ignorance of "The Age" (*aion*) and things pertaining to it (*aionian*).

The bottom line is that Augustine's argument in his City of God holds no water, and even the Latin scholars who have translated his books know this and inform us in their footnote of Augustine's misleading rhetoric. In fact, Dr. F. W. Farrar, in his book, The Eternal Hope, page 198, says of Augustine:

"Since *aion* meant "age," *aionios* means, properly, "belonging to an age," or "age-long," and anyone who asserts that it must mean "endless" defends a position which even Augustine practically abandoned twelve centuries ago."

And so we see that in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, the words, *olam* and *aionian* refer to a limited period of time. This is why most of the early Christian Church scholars understood the lake of fire to be only age-lasting. Augustine was the first to actually advance an argument against this, and he did so on a very flimsy basis, because he did not understand the Doctrine of the Ages.

Augustine was severely handicapped because he was virtually ignorant of the Greek language. Peter Brown tells us this in his book, Augustine of Hippo, page 36:

"Augustine's failure to learn Greek was a momentous casualty of the Late Roman educational system; he will become the only Latin philosopher in antiquity to be virtually ignorant of Greek."

What was worse, in time the Latin Church no longer saw the need to learn Greek, and this deficiency perpetuated the error with little chance of correction. Peter Brown tells us of this:

"Gradually the 'learned fellowship' would cease to feel the need for Greek books. For they had Augustine." (Ibid., p. 272).

It is not our purpose to detract from Augustine's genuine contributions to the Church and to Christian thought. He did have his strong points, which made him the most influential Latin theologian of his time. We will comment later on some of his important contributions to Christian thought, but for now we have necessarily limited our comments to the subject at hand, showing the history of the word "eternal" and how events shaped its modern interpretation.

CHAPTER 5

The Restoration of All Things

We have seen earlier from Rev. 20:4-6 that the first resurrection includes only a portion of the believers. Some call them the overcomers; we call them the firstfruits. We also saw from John 5:28,29 and Acts 24:15 that a second resurrection would come, in which both just and unjust men would be raised. This second resurrection is referred to in Revelation 20:11-15.

After the second resurrection, all unbelievers will be “cast into the lake of fire.” We have already shown that they will NOT be subjected to literal torture. But we need to focus our attention on the more positive question of what their condition will be.

The State of Resurrected Flesh

In 1 Corinthians 15:35 Paul expresses some very typical Epicurean banter which Paul had to answer:

³⁵ But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"

The Bible only points to Jesus as the Example of how the dead are raised. We read in Romans 8:11 that the Spirit of God raised Him from the dead. The Bible, however, does NOT reveal *how* this is accomplished.

As to the type of body the dead will manifest at the resurrection, the example is again seen in Jesus' resurrected body. In Luke 24:36-39 Jesus appeared to his disciples after His resurrection. We read here:

³⁶ And while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

From this we see that Jesus was not a spirit, at least not in the usual sense. We read in other places that after His resurrection Jesus also ate with His disciples (Luke 24:30; John 21:13). Spirits cannot eat food, nor do they have marks upon their bodies as Jesus did.

On the other hand, Jesus did not have ordinary flesh either, for He was able to walk through walls (John 20:26) and to vanish into thin air (Luke 24:31). In Luke 24:39 (quoted above) Jesus said He had “flesh and bones,” but no mention is made of having blood. Why? Because the soul is in the blood (Lev. 17:11, translated properly). Men are buried in a soulish state, but raised in a spiritual state, as we read in 1 Cor. 15:44.

⁴⁴ It is sown a natural [*psuchikos*, “soulish”] body, it is raised a spiritual

[*pneumatikos*, “spiritual”] **body. If there is a natural** [soulish] **body, there is also a spiritual body.**

The soulish body has flesh and blood; the spiritual body has flesh and bones. There are some who believe that in this present life we have a physical body, but in the next life we will be spirits, no longer having bodies. Jesus' example shows that this view is incorrect. While the resurrected body is not limited by the flesh as we are today, it is yet physical and tangible in some way.

Perhaps the best explanation of the resurrected body is found in Ezekiel 44. The sons of Zadok, we are told, will have a reward different from the ordinary Levitical priesthood. In New Testament terms, the sons of Zadok represent the Melchizedek Order, those who inherit the first resurrection. These are differentiated from the Levites, who represent the rest of the Church. God tells Ezekiel that the “Levites” in that day will be allowed to minister to the people in the “outer court” (the flesh), but only the “sons of Zadock” will be allowed to minister to God as well as to men.

We are told that the “sons of Zadock” will wear their linen garments when ministering to God; but then they must change into woolen garments when ministering to the people (Ez. 44:19). Linen here represents the spiritual state; while wool, which comes from animals, represents the physical state. In other words, the sons of Zadok, those who inherit the first resurrection, will be able to move from the spiritual dimension into the physical at will, even as Jesus did. The rest of the Church will not be allowed this privilege until they are transformed at the second resurrection a thousand years later.

Jesus was the product of a heavenly Father and an earthly mother. Before His incarnation, he had authority in heaven. He was born of a woman as the Son of man in order to receive authority in the earthly, physical realm as well. When His work was completed, He could say in Matt. 28:18, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*”

The goal of resurrection and transformation into His Image is to become like Jesus. We too have a heavenly Father and an earthly mother. Jesus is our Pattern Son, and we follow in His footsteps. As men are raised from the dead in the three resurrections, they will be given authority in both the heavenly (spiritual) dimension and the earthly (physical) dimension. Both are important in the plan of God, at least until such time as the Restoration of All Things is completed.

The Nations in the Final Age

In both the age to come and the Final Age after it, there will be many unbelievers who will learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9). It is the purpose of God's judgments to teach men the divine law and to enforce their practice. This enforcement of restitution to all victims of injustice also finally results in the restoration of all things. When the lawful order is fully restored, then all judgment ceases and God's forgiveness covers the whole earth and its inhabitants.

God's method of teaching is by putting the principles into practice during that Age and by righting all wrongs of the past ages which men “got away with” at the time. By these means all the nations of people outside the new Jerusalem will begin to learn His laws, even as prophesied in Isaiah 2:2-4.

² Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. ³ And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.

This prophecy is repeated in Micah 4:1-5. This is the nature of Jesus' JUDGMENT called "the lake of fire." It is when the nations are purified. It is when the nations of all past ages, *many of whom never heard the name of Jesus*, will be able to learn of Him. As a result, they will accept Him as King and as their Savior sooner or later. When they do, "*they may enter by the gates into the city*" (Rev. 22:14) and thus have access to the tree of life.

And so, the *unbelievers* raised at the last judgment will not have "spiritual flesh" as will the believers. They are raised to judgment, not to immortal life (John 5:29). They will not be immortal, nor will they be incorruptible, as will the believers (1 Cor. 15:53). They will still be "flesh and blood" which "cannot *inherit* the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50). When they turn to Christ in repentance for their sins, they will be much like Christians today, although the world will be vastly different politically.

Some will gladly recognize Jesus as the King of kings, submitting to the refiner's fire; others will only do so by constraint of law. Some will be refined in short order; others will need a very long time to pay all the restitution for their crimes against God and men.

Perhaps their life spans will be divinely set in order to accommodate these differences in time needed for each to restore the lawful order. We are not told in Scripture. But at the end of it all, when all enemies have been put under His feet, then death itself shall be destroyed, and God will be "all in all." That is, the fullness of the Holy Spirit will be in all men, NOT some in all, or all in some, but *all in all* (1 Cor. 15:28).

Jesus said that the wicked would be cast into "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12). This is the part of the earth that is outside the new Jerusalem, which is the kingdom of Light. It is NOT a literal darkness, for the sun and moon will continue to shine on them even as today. In Revelation 21:23 and 22:5 we are told that "the city" alone has no need for the sun and moon, since Jesus was there as its Light. But it does NOT say that the sun and moon will stop shining upon the rest of the earth. And so this "outer darkness" is comparable to the spiritual darkness in the world today (Matt. 4:16).

There are many "nations" living outside the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24-27) who will begin to walk in the light (that is, follow its laws in obedience to its King). These "nations" are the unsaved peoples of the earth from all past ages. They are not allowed to LIVE in the city, for this is reserved only for the citizens of the Kingdom, who have been

given bodies of “spiritual flesh.” Yet there will be people of these other nations who WILL have access to the city, for we read in Rev. 21:26:

²⁶ And they [the nations] shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it [the new Jerusalem];

John also says in chapter 22:

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

The citizens are already IN the city. The implication here is that the rest of the people—those in the “outer darkness,” or “the lake of fire”—may “enter” the city from the outside, if they qualify.

In the book of Zechariah, the prophet also tells us that these other nations of people will be able to come into the city. In fact, they will be REQUIRED by divine decree to come to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Some will obey and some will not. If they do not, God will keep the “rain” from falling upon those nations. We read of this in Zechariah 14:16-19. We begin with verse 9:

⁹ And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be *the only one*, and His name *the only one*. . . .¹⁶ Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and *to celebrate the Feast of Booths*.¹⁷ And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them.¹⁸ And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up *to celebrate the Feast of Booths*.¹⁹ This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up *to celebrate the Feast of Booths*.

We will deal with the feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, more fully in our next chapter. For now we simply point out that there will be nations outside the Kingdom such as “Egypt,” who will be required to observe the feast. If they refuse, the “rain” of the Holy Spirit will not be poured out upon them.

When the people of these nations that are outside the new Jerusalem see the blessings of God poured out upon others, they will *want to learn and obey* the divine law. They will learn righteousness. And at the end of that final Age, all of creation will be restored to God. All authority and powers and kingdoms will be in obedience to Him, for He will put all enemies under His feet. Only then will that last enemy (death) be destroyed. Jesus will present the full Kingdom, all of creation, to His Father, and God will be all in all.

All Shall Be Made Alive

This message of the restoration of all things was taught by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28.

²² For as in Adam all die, so also in [the] Christ all shall be made alive.
²³ But each in his own order [*tagma*, “squadron”]: Christ the first fruits [or, “anointed firstfruits”], after that those who are [the] Christ's at His coming [*parousia*, “presence”], ²⁴ then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ²⁷ For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. ²⁸ And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.

Most of this passage is self-explanatory. Yet I should draw the reader's attention to a few critical details.

Verse 22: It is evident that all mankind died in Adam—with *no exceptions*. In the same manner also shall all be made alive in Christ—with *no exceptions*. The “all” in both cases parallel each other and are equal in scope. However, they will NOT all be raised and saved at the same time.

Verse 23: Each class shall be raised in its own order (*tagma*, “squadron”), for there is more than one resurrection ahead. Keep in mind that Paul is here dealing with the various resurrections of mankind. He has already dealt with Jesus' resurrection in verses 1-21. That is the foundation of the resurrections that follow.

The first “squadron” to be raised, according to most translations, is “*Christ the firstfruits*.” This rendering hardly makes sense, since Christ is not a “squadron,” but a single Person. This could have been “*anointed firstfruits*” (see above). The word “Christ” in the Greek is the word for “anointed.” When speaking of Jesus, it is preceded by the definite article *the*, making it “THE Anointed (One),” or “THE Christ.”

For example, in verse 22 (above) the original Greek has the definite article before “Christ,” because Paul is referring to Jesus, “the Christ” in whom all shall be made alive. At the end of verse 23 the same is true when Paul says, “*afterward those that are (the) Christ's at His coming*.” Between these two examples, however, we find a case where the definite article is NOT used: “*Christ the firstfruits*.” It is therefore likely that “Christ” is NOT referring to “the Christ” (Jesus), but rather to a more general squadron of anointed ones.

And so, verse 22 is better understood to mean, “*anointed firstfruits*.” This is the first squadron of believers; those who are to inherit the first resurrection. Paul carefully chose this phrase to describe the firstfruits of the barley harvest, which was to be *anointed* with oil, as we read in Leviticus 23:13.

¹³ **Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine.**

This was in direct contrast with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, the figure of

the second resurrection of the Church in general. Those firstfruits were to be baked with leaven, rather than anointed with oil, as we read in Leviticus 23:17.

¹⁷ You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the LORD.

We will discuss the firstfruits in more detail in our next chapter on the three harvest festivals.

The second squadron of resurrected ones are “*those who are Christ’s at His coming*,” or presence. Christ’s “presence” here is when He comes as Judge at the Great White Throne. This is most clearly portrayed in Daniel 7, where the prophet saw “*the Ancient of Days*” coming to sit upon the throne of judgment (Daniel 7:9 and 22). We have already shown that this is the second resurrection and includes both believers and unbelievers.

Verse 24: “*Then comes the end*” refers to the end of all things, i.e., after the Ages of Ages. This is the third and final time where a squadron of people will enter into God’s rest. It is not quite accurate to call this occasion a resurrection, because it appears that the sinners being judged during that final age will be kept alive to serve out their sentence. We read about this in Revelation 20 where “*death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire*.” If death itself, and hades with it, are cast into the lake of fire, it appears that the first death will be abolished at the Great White Throne Judgment to make way for the second death, or the lake of fire.

The second death is a second TYPE of death. It is defined simply as the lake of fire, which, as we have seen, is the judgment of the law. This second death is the final enemy that must be abolished at the Creation’s Jubilee of the earth at the end of the final age. Paul says clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:26 that “*the last enemy that will be abolished is death*.”

Only then, Paul says, will all earthly authorities have been made subject to His authority. Only then will all enemies have been subdued. Once all enemies are fully under His feet, then will come the abolition of death itself. This can only be accomplished by giving life in Creation’s Jubilee.

Even as the first squadron represents the barley harvest, and the second the wheat harvest, so also this third squadron represents the grape harvest. In order for God to obtain the wine, He must tread out the grapes, that is, He must “*put all enemies under His feet*.” Paul again has chosen His words carefully with the harvest theme in mind.

It is Jesus’ responsibility—indeed, His calling—to rule His Kingdom on earth during the final Ages of the Ages, until the purpose of His reign has been fulfilled. Jesus will NOT reign forever as the Son. He will reign only as long as it takes to subject the whole earth under His feet. It will take BOTH of the coming ages to do this. His purpose is to conquer the whole earth by the power of His Love, for He said in John 12:32,

³² "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." ³³ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

In other words, Jesus said, “*If I am crucified, I will draw ALL MEN to Myself.*” Was Jesus “lifted up” on the cross? Of course He was. Then He will indeed draw ALL MEN unto Himself. He died for the salvation of the whole world, not just a few, and His blood has never lost its power.

When *all men* have accepted Christ as Savior and King, even as believers in past ages have done, then He will present a perfected and completed Kingdom to His Father.

Verses 27, 28: Paul here quotes from Psalm 8:6, as he does so often to prove the point. All things (*ta panta*, “the All”) will be put in subjection to Christ, with the single exception of the Father Himself, who will not, of course, be put under the headship of the Son. And when *the all* is indeed subjected to the Son, then Christ will present the entire perfected creation to the Father as a present and be subject to the Father also. This is truly a glorious destiny for the earth. This is the Creation’s Jubilee.

The Witness of Hebrews

Hebrews 2:6-9 continues this same teaching:

⁶ But one [David] has testified somewhere [Psalm 8], saying, "What is man, that Thou rememberest him? Or the son of man, that Thou art concerned about him? ⁷ "Thou hast made him for a little while lower than the angels; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, And hast appointed him over the works of Thy hands; ⁸ Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. "For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now [at present] we do not yet see all things subjected to him. ⁹ But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for *everyone*.

Here the author defines “all” as “everyone.” Not all are in subjection to Christ at the present time, but the day is coming when all men everywhere WILL be subject to Him. Meanwhile, the Scripture says, we see that Jesus tasted death for EVERYONE. “*He left nothing that is NOT subject to Him.*”

Paul refers to Psalm 8 again in Philippians 3:20 and 21.

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Many Christians today have never really thought about whether Jesus really has this power or not. They assume that He is essentially powerless to save any but the firstfruits, a tiny portion of the harvest, because Jesus will not go against the will of man. But Jesus Himself said in John 12:32 that if He would die upon the cross, He would “draw” all men to Himself. The word “draw” is the Greek word, *helkuo*, which means “to drag.” As used in the New Testament, it always indicates that the one doing the dragging is imposing his will upon the ones being dragged.

John 6:44 says no man can come to the Father except the Father DRAG him. John

12:32 says that Jesus will DRAG all men to Himself. John 21:6 speaks of dragging the net to bring the fish to shore. James 2:6 speaks of the civil magistrates, who, in persecuting the Christians, would DRAG them to court.

It is apparent, then, that the day will come when God's will is going to be imposed upon all men. He will drag all them to Himself by means of judgment, that is, the lake of fire. He has both the power and the will to do this.

In Philippians 2:10,11, Paul says:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus *every knee* should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, ¹¹ and that *every tongue* should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John saw the fulfillment of this in a vision recorded in Revelation 5:13.

¹³ And *every created thing* which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.*"

John well knew that the purpose of Christ's rulership in His Kingdom was to draw all men to Himself. He wrote in 1 John 2:2,

² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.*

Of this verse, Clement of Alexandria gives us a commentary on its meaning and scope in his Commentary on 1 John:

"And not only for our sins, that is, for those of the faithful, is the Lord the Propitiator does he say, but also for the whole world. He, indeed, saves all; but some He saves converting them by punishments; others, however, who follow voluntarily He saves with dignity of honour; so that every knee should bow to Him, of things in heaven, of things on earth, and things under the earth—that is, angels and men."

What a marvelous thing that Jesus would die not only for our sins (that is, for us as Christians), but also for the sins of the entire world! Surely the blood has not lost its power since then. Paul told Timothy (1 Tim. 4:10,11) to preach this as well.

¹⁰ For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

¹¹ Prescribe and teach these things.

Believers are especially singled out, because their salvation comes first. Theirs will be a greater honor, because they will inherit Life in the Kingdom. But yet, God is the Savior of ALL MEN. No doubt Timothy and others like him did indeed teach this in Asia Minor, for the early Church leaders in the next centuries were faithful to teach these things, as their writings prove.

And today we are likewise exhorted to teach these things. Why? Because it is important to understand that God is truly *righteous in His judgments*. The usual teaching of endless torment makes God unjust. By what standard? By God's standard, as revealed

in His law. That is the only righteous standard in the earth. And for this reason we must know of the restoration of all things.

What Paul told the Colossians

Paul's doctrine was clearly spelled out in Colossians 1:16-20.

¹⁶ For by Him all things [*ta panta*, “the all”] were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things [*ta panta*, “the all”] have been created by Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things [*ta panta*, “the all”] to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I* say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

In this passage, Paul first defines “the all” as the created universe, both in heaven and on earth, including not only visible things like people, but even the invisible things like authority itself. Then Paul says that it was THE FATHER'S GOOD PLEASURE to reconcile all these things to Himself by the blood of Jesus. Can anything be clearer? This is not a hidden doctrine. No one needs to twist Paul's words to understand this plain teaching. God hid it in plain sight.

The Theology of Paul in Romans 5

The book of Romans is really Paul's course in theology. In his fifth chapter he shows the comparison between Adam and Christ in the process of justifying all men.

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because [*eph ho*, “on which”] all sinned—.

This tells us that through Adam, sin entered the world, along with its penalty, death. Adam's sin was then imputed to all of us, not only to His descendants, but indeed to all of creation, which groans in travail because of it (Rom. 8:22).

Adam's sin was *imputed* to us. That simply means, we were blamed for his sin, though it was an act done *outside of ourselves*. And thus, we all had to pay the penalty for Adam's sin, which is *death*. This is why we are all mortal. We are not mortal because WE sinned; we are mortal because Adam sinned, and his sin was *imputed* to us.

By the same process, the righteousness of Jesus is an act done *outside of ourselves*, but which is *imputed* to us. Thus, we benefit from its effect—life, or immortality. We may illustrate the principle like this:

1. Johnny steals a cookie.
2. The whole class gets blamed for it.
3. The class must pay back with 2 cookies.

The trouble is, no one in the class has any cookies, nor do they know how to make them. But suddenly a smart new kid named Ricky comes to class. What a break! He knows how to make cookies! So . . .

1. Ricky makes cookies and repays the debt.
2. The class gets the credit for it.
3. The class is free to go out and play.

Johnny and Ricky have something in common. By one bad deed Johnny brought guilt upon the whole class, and so they all had to pay the penalty. On the other hand, by one good act Ricky brought justification to the whole class, and so they all benefited.

This is what Adam's sin did TO us; and this is what Jesus righteous act did FOR us. But what is the SCOPE of this? Was Paul talking about only a few people? Or was he talking about *equal numbers of people affected*? Romans 5:18 and 19 gives us the summarized answer

¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

It is self-evident that all men (NO EXCEPTIONS) were affected by Adam's sin. All men were born mortal. In the same way, Jesus' act of righteousness results in the justification of all those who died in Adam. Paul is talking about the same group of people.

If Adam's sin affected all men, and Jesus' righteous act affected only a tiny fraction of men, then Jesus could hardly be compared to Adam. Surely Adam's power is not greater than Jesus' power! The early Church did not think so, and it is time this teaching were restored to the body of Christ. It is time we restored this teaching to the Bible-believing Church. It is time we get a plain view of the power and will of God to be the Savior of all men, a God who loses nothing, but gathers up all the fragments of men throughout history, that none be lost (John 6:12).

This is the great Mystery of the Gospel, what Paul calls "the secret of His will" in Ephesians 1:9.

⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. . . . ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

This is the secret; this is the "*intention which He purposed in Him.*" It is the plan for the created universe, "The All." He will be King of kings and will subject all things under His headship. Clement of Alexandria summarized it all 1800 years ago (Stromata VII, 2:5-12) by saying:

“All things are arranged with a view to the salvation of the universe by the Lord of the universe, both generally and particularly. But necessary corrections, through the Goodness of the great overseeing Judge . . . or through the great and final judgment, compel egregious sinners to repent.”

The Ministry of Restoration

The fourth chapter of Malachi tells us that “Elijah” will come to prepare the way before the Messiah. Jesus said that John the Baptist had that calling, which was to “*restore all things*.” We read in Matthew 17:11-13,

¹¹ And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹² but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

What John did was only a small fulfillment of the work that was to be done at Christ’s second appearance. How do we know? Because Malachi prophesied it would be done before “*the great and terrible day of the LORD*.” That day is yet future, for 2 Peter 3:10 says that “*the day of the Lord will come like a thief*.”

It is plain that this ministry of restoring all things is to precede the second appearance of Christ, when He comes to rule His Kingdom. Thus, the company of people who are called to help fulfill the prophesied Elijah ministry must know about this restoration. They themselves are called to “restore” in the sense of calling people to repentance. But they are also called to bear witness to the great Restorer who comes afterward and to prepare the people’s hearts for that divine plan of Restoration. Peter summarizes that message in Acts 3:19-21.

¹⁹ Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until *the period of restoration of all things* about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

The purpose of this book is to reveal the secret of His will. This secret is that God will reconcile “*The All*” of creation, as Paul told the Colossians. It is to be the Savior of “*all men*,” as Paul told Timothy. It is to justify “*all men*,” as Paul told the Romans. It is to make “*all men*” alive and to subject “*The All*” to Himself, as Paul told the Corinthians. It is that “*every knee*” will bow and “*every tongue*” will confess, as Paul told the Philippians. This is the mystery, the secret, which Jesus revealed to Paul in the three years he spent in the desert. It is now time for the world to rediscover it.

CHAPTER 6

God's Three Harvest-Festivals

When Israel came out of Egypt, God told them they were to commemorate their main experiences in certain ceremonies conducted upon specific holidays, or festivals. The three main celebrations were Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. These are also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Harvest (or Feast of Weeks), and the Feast of Ingathering. God's basic instructions were given in Exodus 23:14-17.

¹⁴ **Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me.** ¹⁵ **You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.** ¹⁶ **Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field.** ¹⁷ **Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.**

The feast of **Passover** and the seven days of Unleavened Bread, is first. It commemorates the day Israel left Egypt under Moses on their way to the Promised Land. The second feast, **Pentecost**, or Harvest, commemorates the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, the day the fire of God came down upon the mount, and God spoke to all the people. The third feast, **Tabernacles**, or Ingathering, commemorates two things: (1) the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness; and (2) the time Israel was *supposed* to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land.

These experiences were set up to remember certain key experiences in the life of the nation. But they also have other levels of meaning. On the personal side, Passover signifies our Justification from the bondage of sin ("Egypt"). Pentecost signifies our Sanctification by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Tabernacles signifies our Glorification at "*the redemption of our body*" (Romans 8:23), when we inherit our "Promised Land."

The Three Harvests: Barley, Wheat, and Grapes

A particular harvest is associated with each of these three feast days. Passover is associated with the harvest of **barley**; Pentecost is associated with the harvest of **wheat**; and Tabernacles is associated specifically with the **grape** harvest. Because this is so little-known, most do not understand Paul's teachings on the three harvests.

In the land of Palestine, barley was the first to ripen in the spring of the year. When the people came to Jerusalem for the Passover, each brought a handful of ripe barley to give to God as the firstfruits of the harvest. On the Sunday after Passover, the priest took some of the barley and waved it up and down before God (Lev. 23:10-14). The New American Standard Bible has a footnote on this passage, which reads:

“The feast of *first fruits* involved presenting to the Lord a sheaf (lit. an omer) of the *barley* harvest . . . First fruits symbolized the consecration of the entire harvest to God and was an earnest, or pledge, of the full harvest yet to be gathered.”

Only barley could have been used, because the wheat had not yet ripened at Passover in that part of the world.

There is an Old Testament story that shows this as well. Recall that in the days of Moses, God put ten plagues upon Egypt before Pharaoh allowed Israel to leave. Israel finally left the day after the tenth plague, and this came to be celebrated as the feast of Passover. The seventh plague to come upon Egypt shortly before Passover was the *hail*. The Bible tells us that the hail destroyed the barley, because it had already eared out (ripened), but the wheat was not destroyed, because it had not ripened yet. Exodus 9:31 and 32 says,

³¹ Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. ³² But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they ripen late.

A footnote in the NASV comments on this:

“The *wheat* and spelt (an inferior kind of wheat) were not harmed at this time because *they ripen a month or so later.*”

So we see that the wheat ripened later around the time of Pentecost. Just as barley was offered to God on the first day of the week after Passover, so also was wheat offered on Pentecost seven weeks later. This is made clear in Exodus 34:22, which reads,

²² And you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year.

The grapes ripened at the end of the growing season, in late summer. The grapes were harvested and thrown into the winepresses to be trodden down, and the juice was collected. On each of the seven days of the feast of Tabernacles a pitcher of grape juice from this harvest was poured out before the Lord as a drink offering in the temple (Lev. 23:27).

And so we see there were three main feast days of Israel: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Each of these called for temple ceremonies involving a different product of the harvest: barley, wheat, and grapes. The first two are *grain*; the last is a *fruit*. These are harvest festivals at the three times in the year when all the males were to stand before the presence (“face”) of God. These three festivals are prophetic of the “harvest of souls,” where the divine command goes forth for men to stand before God.

The Significance of Barley in the Bible

If we were to study the passages in the Bible where barley is mentioned, we would find much valuable information about the first resurrection and the character and calling of those who qualify for it. The fact that barley matures early tells us that the “barley firstfruits” are the first people to mature spiritually to bring forth the fruits of the kingdom that God requires. Barley also can survive drought, heat, and cold much more easily than can wheat.

In the story of Elisha, for instance, during a drought, a man brought him the

firstfruits of barley (2 Kings 4:42). This occurred about the same time Elisha overcame death in the pot of stew, which signifies resurrection. The prophet then multiplied the barley and fed a hundred men.

A New Testament example is found in John 6, where Jesus fed the five thousand. It occurred at the time of Passover (6:4), and the lad brought five *barley* loaves and two fish (6:9). After multiplying the bread, Jesus told his disciples to “*gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*” Later in the same chapter, Jesus gives us the lesson in this story three times, saying, “*I will raise him up at the last day*” (6:39,44,54). In other words, even as twelve baskets of barley fragments were gathered so that nothing would be lost, so also the barley company, which was broken to feed the people, will be raised up at the last day of this present age. Twelve is the Biblical number of divine government. The barley people are called to rule and reign with Christ.

As for the calling of the barley company, we read that Gideon and his army were called “*a loaf of barley bread*” (Judges 7:13). God is raising an army of overcomers who will rule with Christ to subdue all nations under His feet. Their weapons are a trumpet and a clay pitcher with a torch hidden inside. Gideon gave his army instructions that they were to remain quiet until the trumpet sounded. Then they were to smash the earthen jars and reveal the torches inside.

The trumpet signifies resurrection, for Paul tells us that the dead will be raised “at the last trump,” (1 Cor. 15:52) that is, the seventh trumpet. As for the clay pitcher and the torch inside, Paul says that the glory of God is hidden within us for a time, and that “*we have this treasure in earthen vessels*” (2 Cor. 4:7). A time is coming when the last trumpet will sound, and these bodies of death, the “*earthen vessels,*” will be broken to reveal the light of the glory of God. This will occur at the first resurrection.

The Significance of Wheat in the Bible

A study of wheat in the Bible teaches us about the Church in general and the manner in which the Church is raised and judged briefly in the second resurrection. The firstfruits of Pentecost signify the second resurrection, when the Church is raised up to stand before the face of God. As we said earlier, wheat ripened by Pentecost. On that day the high priest was to offer to God two loaves of wheat bread *baked with leaven*. Once God had received His portion, then the people were allowed to harvest and eat of that year’s crop of wheat.

The feast of Pentecost focuses upon people who are leavened. Israel received the law at Mount Sinai on the day of Pentecost. On this day they were formed into a kingdom, as God spoke the Word to them. The people were afraid of the fire and ran from the voice of God. (See Exodus 20:18-20.) The people were leavened and did not want to step into the fire of God to stop the leaven. So Pentecost was not fulfilled in the days of Moses.

In the second chapter of Acts, Pentecost was finally fulfilled because the disciples did not run from God, but embraced the fire. Yet a basic problem remained—the Pentecostal Age was still leavened, and the Church in general has followed Israel’s example under Moses by refusing to hear God’s voice and by running from His fire.

Pentecost was not designed to bring perfection, i.e., an unleavened condition.

Pentecost gave us only an “earnest” of the Spirit, a downpayment, rather than the fullness. The NASV calls it a “pledge.” Ephesians 1:13 and 14 says,

¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

This is affirmed in 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5. As a consequence, we presently live in an age of leaven, an age of an imperfect kingdom of priests who lack the fullness by which they may bring the kingdom to perfection. If there is one thing we have learned in the Pentecostal Age, it is that we cannot inherit the perfected kingdom on the basis of a mere earnest of the Spirit. Only those with the fullness of His Spirit can fully inherit the promise. This is frustrating to the barley company, of course, who live in a Pentecostal Age, yet desire the fullness of the Spirit. But all must await the appointed time. It is a corporate blessing that God will give to the entire barley company at the same time, and this must await the time when all those of the barley company have been born and have come to full maturity.

This situation is typified by Caleb and Joshua in the days of Israel in the wilderness. These two men were like the barley company in the midst of the wheat company, “*the church in the wilderness*” (Acts 7:38). They wanted to cross the Jordan and enter their inheritance early, but because the majority of the Israelites had refused to enter, Caleb and Joshua had to wander in the wilderness as well. This hardly seems fair, but God works on both an individual and a corporate level. Individuals may certainly manifest barley character in their heart, but they cannot enter the Promised Land until the appointed time.

In the New Testament we are seeing the same pattern being repeated. The people of the New Testament kingdom have been wandering in a wilderness of their own for 40 Jubilees (40 x 49 = 1960 years). Although the Calebs and Joshuas of this present age have seen the Promised Land and have longed to cross the Jordan into their inheritance, this has been denied them until the appointed time. Most of these overcomers have died not having inherited the promise. However, God will raise them from the dead at the seventh trumpet of some year, so that they may enter their inheritance alive with those of the barley company who are alive in that day.

Perhaps the most significant Old Testament passage dealing with the wheat harvest is found in the story of Saul’s coronation as the first king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-12). The people had demanded a king before David was born, so God gave them Saul to reign over them. The kingdom was thus renewed (1 Sam. 11:14), but it was a kingdom mixed with leaven. Saul was crowned on the day of Pentecost, for in Samuel’s coronation speech he says in 1 Samuel 12:17: “*Is it not the wheat harvest today?*” That is, it was the day the two loaves of wheat bread were being offered to God, signaling the beginning of wheat harvest.

Saul was to Israel what the Church was in the New Testament era. Saul started out doing what was right, but in the second year of his reign he disobeyed God, and as a result he became disqualified to rule Israel. (See 1 Sam. 13:1, 13, and 14.) Nonetheless,

God allowed him to continue ruling Israel for another thirty-eight and one-half years.

This followed the pattern of Israel under Moses precisely. Recall that under Moses the people refused to cross the Jordan in their second year as well, and as a consequence, God made the nation wander in the wilderness for another thirty-eight and one-half years.

In the New Testament, the same pattern held true once again. At Pentecost the Church had a fine start, but the people (as represented by their rulers in the Sanhedrin) refused to obey God. The focal point came in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), who fulfilled the part of Caleb and Joshua in urging the people to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. Even as the people *nearly* stoned Caleb and Joshua, so also did they *actually* stone Stephen. This was the New Testament era’s refusal to “cross the Jordan,” and it resulted in a 40-Jubilee wandering in a wilderness again.

This understanding is corroborated by the meaning of the name “Stephen.” In Greek, *stephanos* means “crown.” And so the stoning of Stephen in symbolism was the rejection of the crown of life. The refusal to “cross the Jordan” and inherit the Promised Land was the rejection of the inheritance promised to us that is our hope, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23).

And so this past age has been the era of Saul’s rule. The kingdom was indeed established at Pentecost in the second chapter of Acts. But it was not the perfected kingdom, typified by the Davidic rule. It was instead an imperfect kingdom, *full of leaven*, as history has shown, typified by the reign of Saul in the Old Testament. As in the days of Saul and David, the nation must await the end of Saul’s reign before the Davidic reign can begin.

It is the age of the Church, the wheat harvest. Those of the barley harvest, like Caleb and Joshua, must await the completion of the Church age before inheriting the first resurrection. Stephen’s kingdom message in Acts 7 was rejected when he urged the high priest to follow Joshua-Jesus across the Jordan. And so we were sentenced to wander in the wilderness—again!

As we can see, there is always an element of judgment surrounding the feast of Pentecost. The fire that came upon Mount Sinai at the first Pentecost was supposed to bless the people with the divine presence. However, the people drew back in fear. They were afraid to hear His voice, and thus they lost the divine presence. The fire of God then moved to an alternate location, an external tabernacle made with hands. Without the divine presence upon the people, and without the ability to hear the voice of God within their hearts, they could not have the faith necessary to cross the Jordan later. Thus, Pentecost proved to be a judgment to them.

When Saul was crowned on Pentecost, Samuel prophesied “thunder and rain” that day (1Sam. 12:17). Rain on Pentecost was as unusual as snow in summer and honour in a fool (Prov. 26:1). Thus, rain and thunder on Pentecost would have been regarded by the people as judgment, even as Samuel obviously intended. We read in 1 Sam. 12:17:

¹⁷ Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by

asking for yourselves a king.

On the other hand, “*thunder and rain*” also signifies the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the voice of God. Thus, while there is judgment in this situation, there is also an element of blessing. It is, in fact, a *mixture* of good and evil, which is precisely the meaning of the two loaves of wheat bread mixed with leaven that were offered to God every Pentecost.

There are many other Biblical examples we could show here, but time and space do not permit this. We must instead go on to show the significance of the wheat harvest in this matter of the second resurrection of the Church. The second resurrection will, of course, be a great blessing to all the believers who were not raised earlier in the first resurrection. Nonetheless, because all those believers are yet mixed with leaven, there is also an element of judgment that comes at the same time. Paul speaks of this judgment in 1 Corinthians 3:15.

¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

This speaks of men in whom the foundation of Jesus Christ has already been laid. It speaks of believers. But because these people are a carnal mixture of wheat and leaven, their works must be tried by fire. The good works (done by faith in obedience to hearing God's voice) will abide; the rest will be burned. The bread must be baked in order to stop the leavening action. This is judgment, but the purpose of the fire is not to destroy the carnal believer, but to purify him, even as we have shown in earlier chapters.

The Church in general will be raised in the second resurrection. Jesus calls them “the just” who receive Life at the same time the “the unjust” are judged at the beginning of that final age in “the lake of fire.” In either case, the fire that judges is the same fire poured out on Pentecost. God's judgment is designed to “*thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn*” (Matthew 3:12).

The baptism of fire upon the wheat (Church) is both good and bad. It represents a purification process, which is judgment upon sin in order to bless the individual. When God works to refine or purify someone, it is not a pleasant experience. No judgment is. But those who understand the mind and purpose of God will readily submit to His “fire,” knowing that God is working all things out for their good.

The Significance of Grapes in the Bible

Finally, a Biblical study of the grape harvest, with the treading of the grapes in the winepresses, tells us the fate of the unbelievers. The winepress depicts God's wrath, judgment, and the lake of fire.

The purpose of the grain harvests of spring (barley and wheat) is to provide bread for God's great communion table. The purpose of the feast of Tabernacles with its celebration of the winepress is to provide the wine for God's table. Without this wine, His communion table would have only bread and would be incomplete. God will have His wine, but it must come by means of the winepress, which speaks of the judgments of God.

God harvests His barley, wheat, and grapes in different manners, even as nature

teaches us. The chaff from the barley falls away very easily, so barley is said to be *winnowed*. That is, the action of the wind itself (by means of fans) are sufficient to get rid of the chaff. This speaks of the barley company, who so quickly respond to the wind of the Spirit.

To remove the chaff from the wheat requires threshing. This is a more severe action, but it does the job. It depicts the fact that the Church will be harvested by means of judgment, or tribulation. The Latin word, *tribulum*, is a threshing instrument.

Finally, to obtain the juice the grapes must be trodden under foot. Grapes do not have chaff, but they do have “flesh” that must be pressed severely in order to obtain the wine. This represents the most severe form of judgment upon the unbelievers. Yet the result is that God obtains wine for His communion table.

Three Levels of Fulfillment

The feast days of Israel prophesy on three levels. **Level One** is the individual personal level. On this level, the Feast of Passover is fulfilled in us by our justification by faith in the blood of the Lamb. Passover was the feast where the people killed a lamb and put its blood on the door posts and lintel. As Christians, we know that Jesus is the true Lamb of God who fulfilled the type and shadow in His crucifixion at Passover. When we put our faith in His shed blood, we are justified by faith.

The Feast of Pentecost is the next step in our walk with God. This is the feast where God begins to write His law upon our hearts, for it was on this day that He first spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel in Exodus 20. Acts 2 gives us the manner of its fulfillment, as the Spirit came upon the disciples in the upper room, and they all heard the voice of God speaking in their own language. Pentecost does not deal with our justification, but with our sanctification. It is the feast wherein we begin to learn obedience and learn how to be led by the Spirit during our sojourn in the wilderness.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the final step in our walk with God. This feast gives us the fullness of the Spirit and brings us fully into the promise of perfection in our relationship with Him. These are the three main steps in our spiritual growth and maturity as we grow up into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Level Two is the corporate fulfillment in the Church, or the Kingdom of God. On this level we see God’s dealings with three Churches, or three stages of the Kingdom on earth. The Passover-level Church, or Kingdom, began with Moses at that first Passover, when Israel came out of Egypt. This first Church is called in Acts 7:38, “*the church in the wilderness*.” This Passover-Age Church ended with Jesus’ death on the Cross at Passover about 1,500 years later. It was an era where the Holy Spirit was WITH the people, but not IN them.

The second Church is the Pentecostal-Age Church, which began seven weeks after Jesus’ resurrection, when the Spirit of God was sent on the day of Pentecost. On this day God renewed the Kingdom by giving it greater power and placing the Holy Spirit within the people. No longer was the temple an external house made of wood and stone. Now the people themselves were the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16).

The Pentecostal Age should have been a time when the Church learned the law of

God and how to be led by the voice of the Spirit. Too often, however, the leadership in the various Church factions put away the law and removed from Christians the right to hear God's voice for themselves. In this they followed the example of King Saul, who stood ready to kill his own son, Jonathan, for tasting the sweet honey of the word in the heat of battle. That story is found in 1 Samuel 14.

²⁹ Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See now, how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey."

That chapter is a historical allegory of the Church and well illustrates the problem during many centuries of the Pentecostal Age, when the Church forbade the people to read the Bible or to hear from God any voice that should go contrary to established orthodoxy of the Church.

The Kingdom of God in the Pentecostal Age did not bring righteousness to the earth, nor could it, because the Church was given only an earnest of the Spirit. Pentecost itself was a feast wherein God mandated that the firstfruits of the wheat should be baked with leaven. The lesson is clear: Pentecost cannot bring perfection to any individual, nor can its Church bring righteousness into the earth. That promise awaits the third and final feast and its Church, or Kingdom.

Level Three: The third Church is the Tabernacles Age Church. At the beginning of this age God will pour out the fullness of His Spirit upon the overcomers. They will rule with power in the earth and bring all things under the feet of Jesus Christ. Their ministry will bring righteousness and the fullness of truth into the earth. It will signal the greatest revival the world has ever seen, as the prophets foretell so often. This age, I believe, will last a thousand years, during which time the Kingdom of God will spread until it fills the whole earth. Habakkuk 2:14 tells us,

¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.

The waters cover 100% of the sea. So also will the knowledge of the God's glory cover the earth. This is the restoration of all things. This is the ultimate plan of God.

Even so, this is only the second level of fulfillment for the feast days. The highest level is the creation level. On this level we focus upon the feasts as harvest festivals, wherein God brings three harvests of souls into His "barn." The first harvest is that of the barley company, the overcomers. This occurs at the first resurrection, which John dates at the beginning of the seventh thousand-year period.

The wheat harvest, which is the Church in general, will be harvested in the second great appointed time at the Great White Throne judgment. This will occur at the end of the thousand years, or the beginning of the eighth thousand-year period.

At this time the unbelievers (grape harvest) will begin to be trodden down in order to cleanse and purify them, so that they too will be fit for the Master's use. The grape harvest will then be harvested at the end of time at the Creation Jubilee. We will have more to say about this in another chapter.

Paul’s Teachings on the Three Harvests

Paul is the only one who actually deals with the three harvests in a single passage. It is found in the great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15. In the first 21 verses, Paul deals with the importance of believing that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. He makes it clear that if Jesus was not raised from the dead, then our faith is all in vain, for His resurrection proves that the Spirit of God can indeed raise the dead. On this historic fact our faith hinges.

Then from verses 22 through 28 Paul deals with our own resurrections and tells us that there are three classes of people, three “squadrons,” who shall be raised at different times in history. These three categories correspond specifically to the three main feast days of Israel. Paul makes this quite clear, as we will see.

1. Barley and Wheat Harvests

Paul begins his discussion of the resurrections by a general statement that lets us know where Paul is taking us. He says in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*” This plainly tells us that all are going to be raised in Christ, even as all died in Adam. Next, he tells us HOW this is to be accomplished, and we will see that not all are going to be raised at the same time.

²³ But each in his own order [*tagma*, or “squadron”]: **Christ the first fruits** [or, “anointed firstfruits”], **after that those who are** [the] **Christ's at His coming** [*parousia*, “presence”].

Most people are agreed that Paul is here talking about two different resurrections. However, most also assume that the first resurrection is that of Jesus, who is the Christ, “The Anointed One.” That is why we see it usually translated, “*Christ the first fruits.*” The second resurrection is then taken to refer to all the believers, and no distinction is made between overcomers and the Church in general. We, however, have good reason to differ with this view.

Remember, Paul had already concluded his section dealing with the resurrection of Jesus. In verse 22 he turned his attention to OUR OWN resurrections, saying that all of us will be made alive, but each in his own order, or *squadron*. The Greek word translated “order” in the King James Version is *tagma*, which is actually a military term, referring to a body of soldiers. Paul is saying that we will be raised in three squadrons.

The first squadron is NOT “Christ the firstfruits,” as most translators have mistakenly assumed. There are three squadrons, and Jesus is not a squadron, but an individual. It should read the “anointed firstfruits.” The Greek word *christos* means “anointed.” Jesus is, of course, THE Christ—that is, “THE Anointed One.” But the word *christos* does not always refer to Jesus. In fact, the word can be applied to anyone or any thing that has been anointed.

When the word *christos* is preceded by the definite article *the*, it usually refers to THE Christ—that is, to Jesus, who is “the Anointed One.” However, when *christos* is used WITHOUT the definite article, it is indefinite and could refer to people or things that have been anointed and set apart for God’s use. Prophets, priests, and kings throughout the Bible were all anointed, or “christened.” The vessels of the temple and

even Jacob's pillow (Gen. 28:18) were anointed

In 1 Cor. 15:22 the definite article is used in the original Greek, where Paul is talking about Jesus "the Christ," in whom all shall be made alive. Then in verse 23, *the* is used in the latter part of the verse, but not in the first part. This implies that the verse should have been understood as follows:

"But every man in his own squadron: (1) the anointed firstfruits; (2) afterward they that are the Christ's at His presence."

Once we realize that Paul was using the theme of Israel's three harvest festivals, his meaning is clear. Paul is here referring to Passover and Pentecost, the harvest of the barley and the wheat. The first "squadron" to be raised from the dead are the *barley* Overcomers; the second is the Church in general, the *wheat* harvest.

It is important to know that the firstfruits of the barley harvest were to be anointed with oil. Paul is referring to this fact here when he says, "*anointed* firstfruits." We read of this in Leviticus 23:13. Speaking of the barley firstfruits as distinct from the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, Moses says:

¹³ Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine.

And so, when Paul lists the first squadron of people who will be raised from the dead, he calls them the "anointed firstfruits." He had in mind the firstfruits of the barley harvest. These will rule and reign with Christ on the earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:6).

Those who belong to Christ, the Church in general, will inherit the second resurrection. These are portrayed in temple ceremony where the two loaves offered to God were first *baked with leaven* (Lev. 23:17). While oil signifies the Holy Spirit, leaven signifies sin (Exodus 12:15; Mark 8:15). This is the main difference between the barley and wheat, and it is obvious that Paul picks up on that difference in his discussion of the first two resurrections. The first is the anointed firstfruits; the second is leavened company, the Church in general.

2. The Grape Harvest

Paul does not stop with the second squadron of people raised to Life. He goes on to the third squadron, and, in fact, he spends more time on this squadron than the other two combined. It is the squadron signified by the grape harvest at the end of the growing season, which was the focal point of the Feast of Tabernacles. So note how Paul carries this theme into his dissertation on the third resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ²⁷ For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says [in Psalm 8:6], "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He [the Father] is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. ²⁸ And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will

be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.

Note how often Paul says these people are to be put “*under His feet*” or “subjected.” There can be no doubt that Paul had the grape harvest in mind, for treading the grapes under foot was universally known to indicate judgment. This is absolutely consistent with the rest of Paul’s writings, where he reveals how all things (*ta panta*, “the all”) will be reconciled to God. Since reconciliation is a term indicating peace between ENEMIES, Paul is obviously referring to the rebellious nations of the earth who are enemies of God in this present age. Paul says that the purpose of creation is for all these nations to be subdued unto Christ.

Then when He has eliminated all His enemies (by turning them into friends), He will finally destroy that last enemy—death. One can only destroy death by giving Life. That is why we refer to this as a resurrection. Only when death itself is banished from the created universe will God be all in all.

CHAPTER 7

The Law of Jubilee

Even as Jesus Christ is the central Person of all history, the law of Jubilee is the most fundamental law of all creation. The law of Jubilee is the basis of forgiveness and grace. It is the purpose and goal of the law itself. It compels a climax of earth history and a full end of the dominion of darkness and sin.

The basic law of Jubilee is recorded in Leviticus 25:8-13.

⁸ You are also to count off seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven Sabbaths of years, *namely*, forty-nine years. ⁹ You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. ¹⁰ You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. ¹¹ You shall have the fiftieth year as a Jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in *from* its untrimmed vines. ¹² For it is a Jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. ¹³ On this year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his own property.

When Israel conquered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, he divided the land among all the families in Israel. This was their inheritance in the land, and no one (other than God Himself) could lawfully deprive them of their inheritance. However, if drought struck the land, or some other type of disaster, the families might lose their land. They would sell the land to someone else until the year of Jubilee.

The value of the land was measured in terms of its ability to produce barley, and an “omer” of barley (about eight bushels) had a fixed value of fifty shekels (about thirteen ounces) of silver (Lev. 27:16). In selling land the buyer was to pay a fair price according to the amount of barley the land could normally produce from the present time to the year of Jubilee. Of course, they could not count the Sabbath years, when the land was to rest and could not produce a crop.

When the fair price had been calculated, the sale was made, and the new owners began to farm the property. The previous owners generally found employment on another estate, unless they were hired to work their own land as laborers for the new owner. It was the right of the original land inheritor to redeem his land at any time if he was able to do so. With each passing year the redemption price of the land was decreased proportionately, because, as we said, the land was not valued as land per se but in terms of its harvests. This eliminated any land speculation.

The law of God forbade the outright sale of one's land inheritance, because the land belongs to God. All land sales were temporary. Today we would call them leases. Leviticus 25:23 says,

²³ The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. ²⁴ Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land. ²⁵ If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. ²⁶ Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, ²⁷ then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. ²⁸ But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of Jubilee; but at the Jubilee it shall revert, that he may return to his property.

No man could permanently lose his land inheritance through debt. At the Jubilee, the land would revert back to him, and any remaining debts were to be cancelled.

The Lawful Right of Redemption

Verse 25 above says also that it was the will of God that the debtor's nearest kinsman should redeem his brother when possible. In fact, the law specifically states in the NASV that "*his nearest kinsman IS TO COME AND BUY BACK what his relative has sold.*" We know that the law is not only a moral document, but is also prophetic, because this is the law that Jesus performed perfectly. It was therefore prophesying that Jesus Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer, would come to buy back everything that was sold when Adam sinned. The Scriptures cannot be broken. If the redeemer has the power to redeem, the law says he is commanded by the will of the Father in heaven to redeem what his brother has lost.

We are His brethren. Therefore, the law demands that Jesus Christ redeem all that was lost in Adam. The only relevant question is whether or not Jesus Christ really did this or not. I believe He did, for the blood has never lost its power, nor did Jesus fail in any point of law to do all that the Father asked of Him. The law was fully satisfied.

The law of redemption was closely tied to the law of Jubilee. Essentially, redemption of the inheritance was always possible prior to the year of Jubilee. If the debtor somehow could scrape together enough money to redeem himself, he always had the lawful right to do so. A near kinsman also had the lawful right to redeem the debtor at any time. We read in Leviticus 25:47-55.

⁴⁷ Now if the means of a stranger or of a sojourner with you becomes sufficient, and a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to him as to sell himself to a stranger who is sojourning with you, or to the descendants of a stranger's family, ⁴⁸ then he shall have redemption right after he has been sold. One of his brothers may redeem him, ⁴⁹ or his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or one of his blood

relatives from his family may redeem him; or *if he prospers, he may redeem himself*.⁵⁰ He then with his purchaser shall calculate from the year when he sold himself to him up to the year of Jubilee; and the price of his sale shall correspond to the number of years. *It is like the days of a hired man that he shall be with him*.⁵¹ If there are still many years, he shall refund part of his purchase price in proportion to them for his own redemption;⁵² and if few years remain until the year of Jubilee, he shall so calculate with him. In proportion to his years he is to refund *the amount for his redemption*.⁵³ *Like a man hired year by year he shall be with him*; he shall not rule over him with severity in your sight.⁵⁴ *Even if he is not redeemed by these means, he shall still go out in the year of Jubilee, he and his sons with him*.⁵⁵ For the sons of Israel are My servants; they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

It is important to understand the law of redemption, because it has everything to do with God's plan for the redemption of both Israel and the world. A friend does not have the right of redemption; only a near kinsman does. This means that if a man sells himself and his family to work for another man, his friend may redeem him—but only if the master allows it. The friend does not have the RIGHT of redemption. Instead, the master has the right to keep the new bondservant in his employ. But if a near kinsman decides to redeem the debtor, the master has no choice in the matter, for the kinsman has the right of redemption.

Jesus came to earth to redeem His people (Luke 1:68). He did not come in the form of an angel, but was born a man, specifically of the seed of Abraham. He did this in order to have the lawful right of redemption. If He had come as an angel, the divine law would have ruled that He was only a FRIEND of sinners, whose sin had given them a debt they could not pay, men who had lost their inheritance through Adam's sin.

Jesus was indeed a friend of sinners, but He had to be more than that. In order to have the RIGHT of redemption for Israel, He had to be more than a mere friend. He had to be born of the seed of Abraham. In order to have the RIGHT of redemption for all mankind, He had to be more than an angelic friend. He had to be born of flesh and blood. He qualified on both counts, as we read in Hebrews 2:11-17.

¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*,¹² saying [in Psalm 22:22], "I will proclaim Thy name to *My brethren*, In the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise." ¹³ And again [in 2 Samuel 22:3], "I will put My trust in Him." And again [in Isaiah 8:18], "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me." ¹⁴ *Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same*, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;¹⁵ and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.¹⁶ For assuredly *He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham*.¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His

brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

We conclude, then, that Jesus Christ was born of flesh and blood in order to have the lawful right of redemption of the whole world. He was likewise born specifically of the seed of Abraham in order to have the lawful right of redemption for the House of Israel. These are separate promises, but they are based upon the same law of redemption. Israel was to be redeemed from the hand of her enemies (Assyria) and would ultimately return to God. The world of flesh and blood, by the same law, will also be redeemed from the final and ultimate enemy—death—for death does not hold the right of redemption and has no choice but to turn every captive loose at Jesus Christ's demand.

The Redeemed Serve a New Master

In the law of redemption, the redeemed bondservant does not have the lawful right to be his own boss or the master of his own destiny. As we quoted earlier in Leviticus 25:53,

⁵³ Like a man hired year by year he shall be with him; he shall not rule over him with severity in your sight.

A redeemer is one who pays the price of redemption for the bondservant. In essence, he buys the bondservant from the master, who is a “stranger,” or foreigner, and who is likely to abuse the man and oppress him. The near kinsman is commanded to redeem his brother on the grounds that he will treat the bondservant in a lawful manner with kindness and consideration. This means that the bondservant merely changes masters. Redemption does NOT mean the bondservant is now free to do his own will. The Apostle Paul discusses this point of law in Romans 6, the chapter where he discusses the supposed right of the redeemed Christian to continue in sin that grace may increase.

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and *having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.* ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² *But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*

Paul's discussion here is based upon the law of redemption. The redeemed bondservant is bound by the divine law to serve the redeemer. Jesus is the Redeemer, who bought us with His blood, and for this reason, as Paul says, we have been “freed

from sin and enslaved to God” (vs. 22). That is, sin is no longer our master, but we now have God as our Master. That means we are now accountable to His law and are expected to be obedient to Him. John says that “*sin is lawlessness*” (1 John 3:4). John also says in 1 John 2:3 and 4,

³ And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

John is not saying that the law is the basis of our salvation. He is saying that our obedience is the outward EVIDENCE that we are saved, for if we claim to be redeemed, but refuse to be a bondservant of Jesus Christ, we do not really know Him. “*By this we know.*” The lawless Christian is violating the law of redemption. For this reason, Jesus says of such people in Matthew 7:23, “*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*”

Lawless Christians will not lose their salvation ultimately. They will be “*saved, yet so as through fire,*” as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:15. And, of course, if a man merely professes to be a believer but is not really a Christian at all—God judges the heart—then such a man will be thrown into the lake of fire for a longer and more extensive kind of purification. Those unbelievers, however, will finally be set free at the great Jubilee at the end of time, for we read in Leviticus 25:54,

⁵⁴ Even if he is not redeemed by these means, he shall still go out in the year of Jubilee, he and his sons with him.

What a glorious promise! The Jubilee is the law of grace. No matter how far a man goes into debt, the Jubilee will set him free. Even if no kinsman redeems him, there is a day coming when he will be set free into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This is why all of creation is awaiting this day. Romans 8:19-25 says,

¹⁹ For the anxious longing of *the creation* waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For *the creation* was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that *the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* ²² For we know that *the whole creation* groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

The law of Jubilee mandates the setting free of all creation at some point in history. Personally, I believe this will come after 49,000 years of history. The lowest level of Jubilee came after 49 years (Lev. 25:8). The trumpet for the Jubilee was blown on the Day of Atonement, which was ten days into the fiftieth year (Lev. 25:9).

In prophetic history we see higher-level Jubilees, such as Daniel's seventy weeks (of years), which is actually ten Jubilee cycles, or 490 years. Jesus set us free on the Cross at the end of Daniel's seventy weeks in 33 AD. (See our book, Secrets of Time, chapter 9.)

The forty-Jubilee cycle of 1,960 years is also important, as is the fifty-Jubilee cycle of 2,450 years. These subjects are covered extensively in Secrets of Time, but are beyond the scope of this book. Yet the final Creation's Jubilee, I believe, is 49,000 years. I cannot prove this, of course, nor is it critical to do so. It is sufficient to know that the law of God demands limits on how long a debtor can be enslaved, or how long a sinner can be in bondage to his sin.

All creation waits in anticipation of this Jubilee. It is the goal of history and the ultimate purpose of God. The law of Jubilee on every level obtains its power by the blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross, as we read in 1 John 2:1 and 2,

¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and *He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

CHAPTER 8

The Two Covenants

Adam and Noah

For the first 2,000 years of man's history, God worked with individuals. Adam and the birthright holders after him ruled as kings over the earth, and there were no false kings to divide the earth into more than one nation. So God could only work personally, rather than nationally. The Holy Spirit of God worked on a personal level until the time of Noah, when the people's iniquity was full.

At the Flood, the Holy Spirit was removed from the earth in a general sense, and this state of affairs continued up to the time of Pentecost in the second chapter of Acts, when the Church received the downpayment (earnest) of the Spirit. This history of the Holy Spirit begins in Genesis 6:3. The Concordant Version literally reads this way:

**³ And saying is Ieue Alueim [or Yahweh Elohim, "the Lord God"],
"Not abide shall My spirit in the human for the eon, in that moreover,
he is flesh. And come shall his days to be a hundred and twenty
years."**

On the surface this verse speaks of the breath (Spirit) of God that was to be removed from mankind, literally by drowning them. See also Genesis 6:17 and 7:22. These verses tell us that all wherein was the breath of life died.

There is a deeper significance to these statements. The word for breath in Hebrew is *ruach*, which has a double meaning. It means both "breath" and "spirit." Hence, on another level of meaning, God's Spirit was also to be removed from men "*for the eon*," or for the age. Looking back on that event, we today know that this is why the Holy Spirit had to be sent to indwell us on the day of Pentecost. On that day God again breathed into the Church the breath of life that had been removed in Noah's time.

On the highest level of fulfillment, this inbreathing of the Holy Spirit will not be fully completed in the sense of the Feast of Tabernacles until the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth as the waters (again) cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). By judgment (the Flood) the Holy Spirit was removed; and by judgment (the Lake of Fire) the Holy Spirit shall once again be poured out upon all flesh. (See Appendix 2.)

The flood was the earth's baptism of water; the lake of fire shall be the earth's baptism by fire. Both are for the purpose of cleansing and purification.

God's Restoration Covenant to Noah

The plan of God is revealed in a progressive fashion throughout the Bible. The plan is legally established in a formal manner by means of God's covenants. It is commonly understood that the first covenant was established in Genesis 3:15, when God said He would crush the serpent's head. However, this is better understood as a promise,

rather than as a formal, legal covenant. There are many promises, but only a few actual covenants as such.

The first time God specifically says that He was establishing a formal covenant was with Noah in Genesis 9. We read in verses 8-17,

⁸ Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ⁹ "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant *with you, and with your descendants* after you; ¹⁰ and with *every living creature* that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. ¹¹ And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of *the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations*; ¹³ I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ "And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, ¹⁵ and I will remember *My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh*; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember *the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth*." ¹⁷ And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

This covenant went far beyond Noah and his descendants. It was a covenant that God made with every living creature on the face of the earth. The nature of this covenant is often misunderstood, because so many teach that God only promised not to destroy the earth BY WATER. They say that this leaves a loophole, and that God will simply destroy the earth BY FIRE next time. This violates the spirit of the covenant.

The intent of God was to promise restoration to all. It was not to limit the way in which He would destroy the earth next time. The flood destroyed "all flesh" in Noah's day; the coming fire will destroy all flesh again—but this time, it will be "the flesh" destroyed in order to save them. Physical flesh was destroyed the first time by water; but the works of the flesh will be destroyed the second time by fire. Even as baptism of water is a washing of the flesh, so also is the baptism of fire an internal cleansing of the heart and spirit. Both forms of baptism purify and cleanse, but on different levels.

The covenant in Genesis 9:10 was made with these four specific categories of living creatures:

1. Noah and his sons,
2. The fowls,
3. The cattle,
4. The beasts of the earth.

These four categories of living creatures symbolically represent “all flesh.” The king of the fowls is the eagle; the king of the cattle is the ox; the king of beasts is the lion; and man is the overall king on earth, given dominion in Genesis 1:26-28. These are the four living creatures around the throne of God in Revelation 4:6 and 7. These are also the four living creatures in the vision of Ezekiel 1:10. These are also the four beasts pictured on the banners of the four leading tribes of Israel.

In the encampment of Israel around the tabernacle of God in the wilderness, the four leading tribes carrying banners were located on each of the four sides around the tabernacle. In the SOUTH the tribe of Reuben carried the banner of the man. In the NORTH the tribe of Dan carried the banner of the eagle (carrying a serpent). In the EAST the tribe of Judah carried the banner of the lion. In the WEST the tribe of Ephraim carried the banner of the ox.

This is a lengthy study in itself and is outside the scope of this book. For further information on this subject, we suggest that the reader see Bullinger’s notes for the second chapter of Numbers in The Companion Bible. It is sufficient for our purposes to see that the four beasts around the throne in Revelation 4 are the heavenly reality of what was pictured under Moses around the tabernacle.

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision in the heavens as he looked to the north (1:4). As the “whirlwind” moved south toward the prophet, he saw first the face of a man (1:5) on the south side of it. Then on the right side (east) he saw the face of a lion. On the left side (west) he saw the face of an ox. Finally, as the vision came close enough for the prophet to see the far north side, he saw the eagle. This is all stated in Ezekiel 1:10.

¹⁰ As for the form of their faces, *each* had the face of a *man*, all four had the face of a *lion on the right* and the face of a *bull on the left*, and all four had the face of an *eagle*.

The position of each creature matches the positions of each banner of the tribes of Israel in their encampment around the tabernacle in the wilderness. Ezekiel was seeing a vision of the throne of God, as he tells us in 1:26. John saw essentially the same kind of vision in Revelation 4.

But what does all this mean? Genesis 9 shows us that these living creatures represent and signify all flesh, or every living creature. In Revelation 4:9 their job description is to “*give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne.*” The final destiny is to say AMEN to God in His plan to restore all of creation to Himself. Hence, we read in Revelation 5:11-14,

¹¹ And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” ¹³ And *every created thing* which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be*

blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." ¹⁴ And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen."

God created this earth to manifest His glory in physical flesh. He gave man dominion over the earth—authority under God—in order to give man opportunity to say AMEN to all that God does. At present, we do not see all things put under His feet, as Hebrews 2:8 makes clear, and for this reason the four categories of living creatures do not yet say AMEN to the plan of God. Enmity yet exists. Men yet disagree with God, thinking they have a better way to govern the universe. But the day is coming when the four beasts will say AMEN, for the whole earth will be filled with His glory.

The plan of God, as covenanted in the days of Noah, will not be fulfilled until every living creature in heaven, in earth, under the earth, and in the sea can give glory to the Father and speak the words that John heard in Revelation 5:13 (above). When all can do so, then the four living creatures will shout joyfully with a resounding, "Amen." This is the true Jubilee trumpet that God is waiting to hear.

Abraham and the Purpose of Election

The covenant with Abraham was to establish THROUGH WHOM the Kingdom of God would spread throughout the earth. With Abraham, God began a new method of operation in the earth. He "elected" and began to form His own nation, designated as the means by which "*all the families of the earth*" would be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

God's idea of election was never meant to be an exclusive salvation for the benefit of just a few. Election, as clearly portrayed by God's dealing with Abraham, shows it to be more on the line of political election. In other words, it is a part of God's government, a hierarchy of authority levels on the earth. God elects men to fill those positions of authority in order to serve mankind. Election and calling determines one's ability to serve mankind, for God equips His servants to do the job He calls them to do. Hence, the highest callings are upon those who are servants of all.

All authority comes with an equal measure of responsibility. This is because authority is not a privilege to be enjoyed in and of itself. It has a purpose. It is given in order to empower men to bless others with salvation (in its broadest sense). And so God's election cannot be viewed as most people have in the past. God does NOT elect a few to be saved, and elect others to be tormented or annihilated eternally. Rather, He elects a few to bring the blessings and the word of reconciliation to the greater mass of people.

And so God elected one man, Abraham, and his descendants after him as a beginning point. God's plan was to employ them first to bring His Word and His Spirit to the rest of the world, to "*all the families of the earth*." Of course, over the years many of them came to view themselves as slave owners, rather than as servants of God called to serve humanity. This is unfortunate, and such people will find themselves unemployed in the coming age of Tabernacles. God is not looking for rulers; He is looking for servants.

Four hundred years after Abraham's call, God made another covenant under Moses in order to establish accountability in the restoration process. In other words, it was not in God's plan to save all of mankind by putting away the law and ignoring their disobedience. God established the law covenant in order that we might know that He will bring all men into accountability. He will certainly restore all of mankind, but not apart

from the judgments of the law. The purpose of the law is to teach and train mankind by means of discipline, so that men may grow up into the full maturity of the stature of Christ.

This is surely a wise and marvelous plan, lest men be rewarded for rebellion and disobedience.

Abraham and Moses: The Two Covenants

The Bible records a number of covenants, but there are two covenants that deal directly with man's salvation. They are commonly called the Old and New Covenants. The Old Covenant was instituted through Moses, who was its "mediator." The New Covenant was mediated by Jesus.

The Old Covenant made man fully liable for all sin. The New Covenant made Jesus fully liable. But in order to understand the relationship between these two covenants, we must take note of Paul's commentary on them in the third chapter of Galatians. It is extremely important that we understand the relationship between these two covenants in order to comprehend the process of man's salvation. Galatians 3:15 reads:

¹⁵ Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is *only* a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. ¹⁶ Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.

In other words, if you draw up a contract with someone, once it has been signed and witnessed by both parties, you cannot change it or refuse to abide by it. It is absolutely binding upon all who sign their names to it. God made a contract (covenant) with Abraham and to his seed. It was by "promise." In modern terminology, we could say that God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham. It was like a "promise to pay," a check that bore only one signature—God's.

If you recall, in Genesis 15 God told Abraham to take five animals and cut them in half. This was a "blood covenant." Although men normally used only one animal, God used five in order to bind Himself five-fold to the fulfillment of its promise. Five is also the number of grace.

No doubt Abraham expected to walk between the animal halves with God, thus making the covenant binding upon both of them equally. In those days, this was how men made blood covenants with each other; they would link arms and walk between the halves, signifying, "may God cut me in half if I break this covenant."

However, God had a better idea. He knew that imperfect men could not be perfectly obedient. He knew that men would always break any covenant they made with God. Thus, men would always be liable, and God would have to cut them to pieces. So God put Abraham to sleep (Gen. 15:12), and as he slept, *God alone* passed between these pieces of flesh (Gen. 15:17).

Thus, the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional in nature. Only God bound Himself to perform certain things. This is what Paul means when he says that this covenant was made "by promise." It is not "by agreement," which is two-sided. It is "by

promise,” which is one-sided, a check to Abraham written and signed by the hand of God alone.

The only problem was that if Abraham could not sign his name to it, then who was going to ratify it? Recall in Gal. 3:15 above, it says that no one can annul it *once it has been ratified*. As we shall see, the promise was given to Abraham, but it was ratified nearly 2,000 years later by Jesus. Verse 17 says it was “*previously ratified by God*” (i.e., before the time of Moses); however, one must remember that in the spirit there is no past or present. And so in the sight of God, Jesus had already died from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8) to ratify the covenant that was, in human terms, yet to come. And so the law is satisfied on this point.

Now Paul contrasts this one-sided, promise-covenant with the two-sided, obligation-covenant, which God later made through Moses:

¹⁷ What I am saying is this: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

You see, Paul is dealing with an apparent contradiction in these two covenants. The first said, “I promise to save all your seed and give them the Kingdom.” The second said, “I will save you ONLY IF you are obedient.” Listen to the conditions of the Mosaic Covenant, which we read in Exodus 19:5 and 6.

⁵ Now then, IF you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, THEN you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

If anyone doubts the conditional nature of this covenant with Moses, just read Leviticus 26, where God spells out the blessings for obedience and the curses (penalties) for disobedience. This was a covenant (contract) that BOTH God and Israel had to sign. It was totally unlike the Abrahamic covenant, where God was both Promiser and Ratifier through Jesus.

And so the problem that Paul raises in Galatians 3:17 is this: Which covenant shall we follow in order to obtain the inheritance, or the promises? More than that, what is the relationship between the two covenants? If God already unconditionally promised the inheritance to Israel in the time of Abraham, then why institute a second covenant under Moses, a conditional covenant at that, which seemed to nullify the Abrahamic covenant?

The answer is that God, in His wisdom, did not wish to raise up children who were rebellious or disobedient. If He had promised to save all mankind regardless of their actions, then God would be saving unrepentant children who had not learned the lessons of obedience that He desired. And so, the covenant under Moses established the judgments of God upon the disobedient and set the standard of righteousness in the earth that men would ultimately attain. The law covenant, spoken out of the midst of fire, established not only the discipline to bring believers into maturity, but also established and defined a future “lake of fire” for the disobedient unbelievers.

God's Last Will and Testament

Suppose you were to go to your attorney and draw up your will. You decide to will your house and property to your son. It is done of your own free will, just because you love your son. Then you return home, tell your son what you have done, and promise that you will never revoke that will.

A year later, you make another trip to the attorney's office, this time taking your son with you. There you draw up a contract whereby you will give your son his inheritance, but he first must build a barn on the property. Both of you sign your names to this second contract, for he must be in agreement with this.

The next year, you die. The attorney calls your son and reads the will to him. He is the inheritor of your house and property. This is a fact that cannot be nullified. However, since he has not yet completed the building of the barn, as specified in the second contract, he is unable to lay claim to his inheritance for the time being.

Do you get the picture? The first covenant was unconditional. The second covenant was conditional. Does the second nullify the first? Never! Your son WILL receive the inheritance. The only question is WHEN. The second covenant has power only to delay the inheritance until he learns patience and obedience.

When God covenanted with Abraham, He gave the inheritance of the Kingdom to him and to his seed. Then He instituted another covenant under Moses to delay the inheritance until such time as the people learned obedience.

But there is another, more universal level of meaning to this story. God chose Abraham and his seed to be a blessing to all families of the earth. Abraham was to be God's attorney to call together all families of the earth (after the death of Jesus Christ) for a reading of His will. They are called to inform the world of their inheritance, now that the Testator has died. This covenant cannot be annulled for any reason. However, under Moses, God set a condition before that promise could be inherited. The condition is obedience. And so, we ask people to make a decision to follow Christ. What does this mean? It means, essentially, that we are to ratify, or sign our names to the Mosaic Covenant, promising to make Jesus the Lord of our life and obey His law (i.e., refrain from sin).

This is what it means to place our faith in Him. They have faith if they truly believe that God is able through Jesus Christ to fulfill His promise. Israel in Moses' day, as they stood at the foot of the mount, believed that Yahweh was the true God and was able to bring them into the Promised Land. They believed that His laws were righteous. And so, by faith, they decided to follow Him.

But did they follow Him? The Bible says that they failed God at almost every step of the way, just as we too fail to be perfectly obedient. Does this mean that the Abrahamic covenant has failed? Was God not strong enough to bring His people into the Promised Land? Was man's will strong enough to make God's promise fail to bring blessing to all families of the earth? No, a thousand times no. Salvation is not dependent upon the will of man, but of God. The will of man is never more powerful than the sovereignty of God. Man's disobedience only delays the final outcome of grace—and even then, it is only because this was part of God's plan from the beginning.

And so, our decision to follow Christ—which is without question the most important decision we can make—is nonetheless NOT the true basis of our salvation. It was not the basis of Israel's salvation either. We are not saved by the will of man, for the will of man has its roots in Moses, not in Abraham. This decision to follow Christ might save us only if we had the ability to fulfill that decision (vow) and never sin again. Even so, making a decision for Christ was important enough in the eyes of God to send Moses to Israel and mediate that decision-making covenant.

Our inheritance with God is instead based upon a better covenant, the new and unconditional covenant signed by Jesus in his own blood. Jesus' death was the only condition by which the Abrahamic covenant could be obtained. A "last will and testament" is not in force until the death of him that made the will, as we read in Hebrew 9:16 and 17.

¹⁶ For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. ¹⁷ For a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

The blessings of our inheritance were spelled out in both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants. However, with the Mosaic covenant the inheritance could be obtained only by the will of the flesh to be perfectly obedient and by the blood of bulls and goats to atone for disobedience. On the other hand, the Abrahamic covenant (will) was made "valid" by Jesus' death. The inheritance is obtained by the will of God alone, and by the blood of the true Sacrifice for sin—Jesus Christ.

Those who believe that their own "decision" will save them, those who believe that salvation comes by the will of man, are in the same position as the majority were in the Old Testament. This opinion led quite naturally to the idea that keeping the law could save men. And so throughout history, from ancient Israel and even throughout the history of the Church, we find men seeking the perfection of the flesh through self-discipline. With it came the idea that doctrinal perfection ("orthodoxy") was also necessary to salvation, for one had to be perfected in both body and soul (mind).

These misconceptions have put a great burden upon the Church. Christians everywhere are driven to seek personal perfection in order to be saved. Many are full of guilt for not fulfilling their vow to be perfect. Christianity for them has become a performance-based religion. So long as they see in themselves personal imperfections, they walk in guilt and fear, rather than in forgiveness and faith. The solution is to see that our salvation and justification, is based upon the decision of God Himself. Our ability to be obedient is a sanctification process by which we—as Christians—learn to hear God's voice as He leads us to the Promised Land, the perfection of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Jesus never advocated breaking the law, nor did the Apostle Paul. But Paul very carefully explains to us that it is impossible for us to obtain our inheritance ("salvation") by means of the law covenant. It comes instead by the death of Jesus, which validated the Abrahamic covenant, the unconditional promise that we shall receive the inheritance. And what He has promised, He will see to it that it shall be done, for this is *His Will*.

How Shall We Build the Barn?

In our illustration earlier, we said that the second covenant was a condition that the son should build a barn before he could receive his inheritance. This is a conditional provision, which cannot nullify the first covenant, yet it DELAYS the inheritance for a time. Thus, it is not really a question of IF, but of WHEN the son inherits the promise.

We answered the question of WHEN in our previous chapters, where we deal with the three harvests. Different people inherit at different times. Or to put it another way, some people “decide” to build their barns before others do. Christians are people who have left Egypt on the way to the Promised Land. (This is the real “barn” that God is telling us to build.)

To continue our illustration, let us say that your son decides to start building the barn immediately. You are pleased. However, he does not know how to build a barn. He is unskilled and unlearned. In fact, the reason you made that covenant was because you wanted him to learn this art. The purpose of this covenant was to teach him something he did not know.

So first you point to a barn that has already been built. “See that barn, son? There is your model. Build one for yourself just like that one. If you have any questions, just study that barn.”

Well, in pouring the foundations, he gets too much gravel for the amount of cement, and the concrete is somewhat weak. He comes to you and asks what he did wrong, and you instruct him. Then he re-lays the foundation. Quite a delay, but then, the best way to learn is by trial and error.

Next, he tries to construct the walls, but they are not quite plumb. Once again, you show him the right way, and this time he does better—still not perfect, but you are pleased that he continues to learn. Finally, when the barn is finished, he comes to you and says, “I have finished the barn; now may I have my inheritance?”

You come to inspect the barn. You notice that the floor is not quite level, and the walls have some cracks in them. The roof leaks a bit, but after all, it is sturdy enough to provide shelter for the cows. “Well done,” you tell your son. “It looks perfect. The inheritance is now yours.”

As a good carpenter, you know that the barn is far from perfect. But as a good father, you also know that you have trained your son, and he has learned a great deal. And so you overlook what is, and call what is not as though it were (Rom. 4:17). You impute perfection to the building. You reckon it perfect, even though the roof leaks.

Then you call your son to your side and tell him, “I had you build this barn in order that you might know how difficult it is to construct perfectly. I also wanted you to become skilled in building barns. But in actual fact, the barn that you have been using as your model is the only barn that I require as a finished product. This perfect barn I now give to you to replace the imperfect barn. And now, all that you see before you is yours. You may have your inheritance.”

We are Imputed Righteous

I heard it said once that we are justified by faith, but that we are sanctified by the law. He who made that statement was trying to motivate the people to obey God's law, because this is God's standard of sin and righteousness. However, he fell into the same trap that men have fallen into for thousands of years. Paul made a profound statement in Galatians 3:3. It reads,

³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

The "model barn" in our illustration is Jesus Christ Himself. We are to pattern our own lives after His. However, we must recognize that imperfect people cannot build perfect barns. Though we have been endowed with the earnest of the Spirit, an in-part spiritual endowment has not the power to make us into the perfect image of Christ. No matter how sincere we are in our "decision" to follow Jesus, no matter how austere we become in our asceticism and beating down of the flesh, all our efforts fall short. This mortal flesh is simply incapable of perfection, and it requires the fullness of the Spirit to bring it to incorruption and perfection. This fullness has yet to be given to men, except for Jesus Himself.

Paul explains in Romans 4 that we have been imputed righteous. The definition of imputation is found in verse 17: *God calls what is not as though it were*. Paul's illustration of this is Abraham. While Abraham was yet childless, God said, "*A father of many nations have I made you*" (Rom. 4:17). In other words, God *imputed* millions of descendants to Abraham, calling what was not as though it were. Abraham believed God, and so it was *imputed* to him for righteousness (Romans 4:3 and 22).

Likewise, when we believe our Father in heaven and have faith that our righteousness is in Christ, God imputes Jesus' righteousness to us. We are no longer our own. Our own righteousness has a leaky roof, a weak foundation, and shaky walls—even under the best conditions. Our own righteousness is important insofar as learning obedience is concerned; but only Christ's righteousness will cause us to inherit the promise. God instituted this promise in the beginning with the Abrahamic covenant; and He has also built the perfect barn ahead of time and without our help in order to guarantee that we shall indeed inherit all things.

And so, while the Mosaic covenant has delayed the promised inheritance, the delay is not eternal. God is not only the Author, but also the Finisher of our faith. He is both Alpha and Omega. He is both our Justifier and our Sanctifier. We have an external righteousness, for it is not in us, but in Christ. Yet while we are here on earth, it is the will of God that we do our utmost to incorporate that external righteousness. Let it be our daily bread, that it may begin to be a part of us, and so may we be called the children of Abraham and the children of our Father in heaven.

Abraham Limits our Liability Under Moses

Liability for sin comes by means of the law, for it is the law that condemns us for its transgression. Paul tells us that the law is weak in that it could only condemn to death, but never save anyone, for the law cannot acquit any sinners, and we are all sinners.

Fortunately for us, the law has another weakness. It was covenanted AFTER the Abrahamic covenant. The law of contracts says that if any contracts contradict each other, the prior one takes the precedence. Thus, the Mosaic covenant is limited in its ability to exact its due of sinners. It can only collect a debt insofar as it does not infringe upon the prior covenant. The promise must come, not only to all of Abraham's seed, but also to "*all the families of the earth*" (Gen. 12:3). It is only a question of WHEN. And so the Abrahamic covenant is limited only by time.

How to Inherit the First Resurrection

The imputation of righteousness to our accounts is something God initiated with His covenant to Abraham. Thus, righteousness is to come to all men unconditionally at some point in time. Peter tells us in Acts 3:21 about the restoration of all things and links it to Abraham's job description to bless all the families of the earth. Most importantly, Peter then defines the word "bless" for us, so as to leave no doubt of its meaning:

²⁵ It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be *blessed*." ²⁶ "For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to *bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways*.

Peter tells us here that all the families of the earth will be BLESSED, but that this blessing was coming upon "you first," that is, his present audience of Israelite Christians. The blessing was "*turning every one of you from your wicked ways*." If, then, this is the blessing that came upon Israel first, it must of necessity be the same blessing that should come upon all the families of the earth. We can only conclude that God will bless ALL the families of the earth by turning ALL of them from their wicked ways.

Yet not all will turn to God in this present age. A few turned to God during the Passover Age. More turned to God during the Pentecost Age. There will be repentance and turning in the coming Tabernacles Age. But even if everyone alive on earth repents, there are still many from the past who died without ever repenting, and countless people who never even heard of Jesus Christ. These must be raised from the dead at the Great White Throne judgment, in order for them to receive the Abrahamic blessing.

As we said earlier, there is a distinction between the Church and the overcomers. Believers in general will receive their reward at the same time the unbelievers are raised (Luke 12: 46; John 5:29; Acts 24:14, 15). Those who have been justified by faith in the blood of the Lamb (Passover Christians) will be given their reward in the general resurrection. Their obedience, or works, is not a factor in their justification. However, there is a special reward to overcomers for their hearing and obedience to God in the sanctification process of Pentecost. Such obedience is defined by Moses in the law and, of course, interpreted more completely by the New Testament writers.

Simply stated, those who are obedient will inherit the special salvation, which John calls the first resurrection. Those who truly hear God's voice and are led by the Spirit during their "wilderness journey" here on earth will ultimately come to know the great secret of being an overcomer. The secret is NOT that we must be sinless or perfect. It is NOT that we must hear the voice of God correctly at all times. It is NOT having

one's membership in a particular Church. The secret is to be a forgiver.

The law of Jubilee is to be eaten, assimilated, and written on our hearts. The final qualification for entering the Feast of Tabernacles and receiving the fullness of the Spirit is to live the principle of the Jubilee. In the feast days of Israel, the Jubilee was observed on the Day of Atonement, which is the tenth day of the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar. It was the preparation day for the Feast of Tabernacles five days later. This shows us that one must fulfill the Jubilee before one can truly fulfill Tabernacles.

In the Lord's Prayer we read in Matthew 6:12, "*And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*" In Luke 11:4 the wording is slightly different: "*And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.*"

Notice that sins and debts are treated as though they are the same. In the law all sin is reckoned as a debt to be paid the victims. The law of God does not sentence men to time in prison, but to work off their debts. And so, Jesus expounded upon this principle in Matthew 6:14 and 15.

¹⁴ For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Jesus was not speaking of our justification, which comes by faith to Passover-level Christians. He was speaking of the Jubilee principle, which applies to the final stage of salvation that comes in the Feast of Tabernacles. He was referring to the difference between the Christian and the overcomer. Those who do not live the principle of the Jubilee—those who do not learn to forgive—will be held accountable for their own sins in like manner at the Great White Throne judgment. They will be saved, yet so as by fire, for God will hold them accountable even as they have held others accountable. God will judge them by their own standard of measure.

Another very striking illustration of the Jubilee principle is found in Matthew 18, where the man who owed ten thousand talents appealed to his creditor for more time to pay the debt. The creditor, who represents God in the parable, gave the debtor a full dose of grace, canceling the entire debt. This speaks of Christians, who have appealed to God for grace to cover their sin.

However, that same ex-debtor then refused to forgive the debts of another man who owed him a very small amount. The conclusion of the parable is found in Matthew 18:31-35.

³¹ So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. ³² Then summoning him, his lord said to him, "You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. ³³ Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you? ³⁴ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers [*basanistes*, "jailers,"] until he should repay all that was owed him. ³⁵ So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.

Many have taught that this parable indicates that Christians can lose their salvation if they do not forgive their brother. The fact is that they can lose their Jubilee and be disqualified from the Tabernacles salvation. They can lose part in the first resurrection, but they will not lose their justification, or their Passover-level salvation.

Not understanding this distinction has caused much misunderstanding and heartache among Christian people for centuries. The early Christian Church developed this problem quite early—with serious consequences. The Greeks were concerned with the ideal, or perfect man. They pointed to Christ as the prime Example of this, yet they also preached the doctrine of sinless perfection in such a way that man became responsible by his own will and works to attain that state of sinlessness.

Soon the idea of justification by faith was replaced by faith and works. But when coupled with the doctrine of the total depravity of man, Christians were left with a sense of futility and discouragement. Attaining perfection was very nearly impossible for the average working person to attain. There were some who left society and became hermits or monks in order to pursue the dream of absolute perfection. There were literally thousands of such people living in the deserts of Egypt and Syria, trying desperately to mortify the flesh and come into full “sainthood.”

It did not take people very long to discover that reaching such perfection by man’s will required far more self-discipline than they were capable of mustering. As a consequence, the ordinary Christian gave up trying. He settled for the goal of attaining salvation by means of the lake of fire (“purgatory”). And so the historian, Peter Brown, writes on page 249 of his book, Augustine of Hippo,

“A society that admires nothing less than a saint can be demoralizing for the ordinary sinner. The tendency was to be content with a vicarious holiness by isolating and admiring a recognizable caste of “holy” men and women, who lived a life, the demands of which were conceived of as so superhuman as to be safely unrelated to one’s own life as a man of the world.”

A statement this long needs some interpretation. He is saying that the “holy” men and women of the early Church were those who were determined to attain to perfection in order to attain the first resurrection. But to do so, they became hermits in caves of the desert, or monks who lived in communities in the desert.

These hermits and monks would eat barely enough to live on. They possessed only one set of clothing, and they slept on the bare ground with no blanket. They gave away all their money and possessions to the poor. They spent almost all of their time in absolute silence, even while in a community of monks. They would cultivate a small garden of vegetables, which they ate raw and made just enough baskets each day to support their other basic needs. But most of their time was spent in prayer and contemplation of God.

It was certainly not wrong to do this. In fact, many of these men were quite remarkable in their wisdom and knowledge of God. Many had great gifts of healing, miracles, and prophecy. But I fail to see how escaping the world’s temptations can help us overcome them. An army does not overcome its enemy by fleeing to the mountains. It seems to me that while it is valuable to spend time alone with God, it is even more important to then return to the world in order to put the lessons learned into practice.

Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, but he returned to preach the Kingdom of God. Paul spent three years in the wilderness, but he returned to take his revelation of God to the world. How many Greeks and Romans might have been converted to Christ if all those hermits and monks had returned from the desert and the caves to preach to them?

Not everyone could drop everything and head for the desert to contemplate God for the rest of their lives. And so the ordinary Christian had a tendency to content himself with a “vicarious” holiness—that is, the super-spiritual caste proved the validity of Christianity, but at the same time made it impractical for the ordinary Christian to ever hope of being an overcomer.

In their belief in Christ these Christians were zealous, but also demoralized and discouraged. Without going to the desert for the next 60 years, many believed they had to go to the purifying fire anyway. So if a temptation came their way, well, a few more sins would not much matter! Little by little, the Church became a necessary but irrelevant part of their lives.

We cannot live this way. Look at the example of Peter, when he walked on the water to go to Jesus. He was far from perfect, but so long as he kept His eyes on Jesus, he stood on solid footing. When he began to look at the wind and the waves around him, he began to fear that it would carry him away. Then he began to sink.

We began this walk by the Spirit. His grace was a free gift to us, apart from our works. We got out of the boat by faith. But then we become aware of all the winds of the earth, the temptations of the flesh, and suddenly we become afraid of them. That fear casts out our faith, and we are in danger of sinking. Our focus must be on Jesus, and if we look to Him and follow His voice, we will overcome the wind and the waves, not consciously, but almost as a by-product of life.

If we simply follow His voice as Peter should have done, He will lead us through many different circumstances of life with the purpose of purifying our hearts. He will lead us through the fire, not that we might be burned and injured in body, soul, mind and emotions, but rather that we might overcome all things in love.

I have found that when I strive most to perfect my flesh, I always fall short. But when I just follow Him in simple obedience, taking all things as coming from His loving hand, thanking Him in all things (1 Thess. 5:18), rejoicing in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4), knowing that all things work together for my good (Rom. 8:28)—when I have this attitude and faith in God, He refines and purifies my heart in a way that I could never do by myself.

Comparing the Authority of Abraham and Moses

We have already shown how the Abrahamic covenant takes precedence over the Mosaic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant, in essence, promised salvation to all of Abraham's seed, and through him to “*all the families of the earth*.” This covenant forever settled two questions: (1) IF salvation would indeed come, and (2) HOW MANY beneficiaries are there?

The Mosaic covenant that God made with Israel 430 years later (Gal. 3:17) has not the lawful power to nullify the Abrahamic covenant, even though it appears to

conflict with it. Moses, being a descendant of Father Abraham, must pay homage to the elder. And so, the Mosaic covenant with its blessings limited by conditions of obedience has the power only to DELAY the inevitable. Or, as we said earlier, the Abrahamic covenant was dated prior to the Mosaic covenant; and Abraham has a lien on all the property that limits Moses' judgment.

God's purpose in instituting the covenant with Moses was to give us a "tutor" (Gal. 3:24), that the heirs of salvation might learn obedience and righteousness before inheriting the promises. Put simply, God wants us to *grow up into maturity* first. Yet the extent of the Mosaic covenant's authority is only in the area of TIME. It can never nullify the "IF" and the "HOW MANY" that were established under Abraham's authority. Moses only has authority in the area of "WHEN."

This is well illustrated by Israel's experience. Under Moses, they gave their confession of faith in Exodus 19:8 with the following vow: "*All that the LORD has spoken we will do!*" Their faith sounded good, but it turned out to be just hot air. God tested their faith ten times, and they failed every test, finally refusing to enter into the land of Canaan. And so they died in the wilderness not having received the promises.

Fortunately, however, their lack of faith could only DELAY the nation's attaining grace (entering into the Promised Land). The next generation entered under Joshua. We know that God uses the same principles in dealing with nations as He does with individuals. And so we stand on solid ground when we say that if men do not have faith in God in this age, God will see to it that they repent by means of judgment in the restoration.

We have also seen that God has made a covenant with "all flesh," which Paul says goes all the way back to Adam (Genesis 9, Romans 5, and 1 Corinthians 15). It is the grace of God extended to all creation, for Jesus was sent to be the Savior of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Yet He still requires that we come to Abraham's bosom by means of the door of faith. We are saved by grace, yet it is through faith.

Only by understanding this principle can we see the true relationship between grace and faith as they work together to bring about our salvation.

The Relationship Between Grace, Faith, and Works

Paul says in Ephesians 2:8,

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

Grace was established by God's covenant with Abraham, though we must hasten to add that it could not be put into force until the death of the Testator, Jesus. (Thus, John says that grace came through Jesus Christ—John 1:17.)

Grace is an act of a sovereign God. Grace is therefore "irresistible," because it did not originate in the mind of man, nor has it any basis in flesh or the will of man. It may be delayed by Moses' covenant, but through Abraham God has bound Himself unconditionally by a five-fold blood covenant to bring all mankind to salvation. The only question is when, in what order, and by what judgments (if any) shall they be resurrected.

Grace is something that God does for undeserving people simply because He loves them. It is something He does out of the council of His own will, and it has nothing to do with the will of man. In this way, grace has the same basis as election, although these are different in that election has to do with the ORDER in which men receive their inheritance, as well as their level of authority in the Kingdom. Men are not “elected” to be saved or unsaved forever; the “elect” are those whom God in His sovereignty has chosen to save FIRST. He is setting up His government in order to prepare the Kingdom for the Church. Thus we find in Rev. 20:4-6 that these officials of the divine government are raised up first.

Not understanding this has caused much friction throughout the centuries between various schools of thought. Those in the past who have recognized God's sovereignty (predestination and election) have often brought it into disrepute by insisting that God deliberately decides NOT to save 99% of mankind, and then to torture them for all eternity! It is little wonder that so few people have been able to stomach such injustice. This has brought the doctrine of election and predestination into disrepute.

In fact, some years ago a well-known theologian plainly stated that he could not believe in election and predestination, because God's justice would then demand that He reconcile the whole universe unto Himself! His analysis was absolutely correct, but he chose to retain the torture theory, rather than Bible truth.

But we must at least give this theologian credit for his consistency, unlike (for instance) John Calvin. Calvin taught that God had predestined a tiny few for salvation and predestined the rest for eternal torment. He was inconsistent in that he recognized God's sovereignty in the matter of grace, but then taught it in such a way as to portray God as an unjust tyrant who judges men by a law not found in the writings of Moses. To know the mind of God, we must understand both the absolute sovereignty and the absolute justice of God.

In the final analysis, we are not saved by faith; we are saved by grace. That is, grace is the basis of our salvation. Works are the result, and between these two things is a great gulf fixed. On the other hand, *faith is the bridge between grace and works*. Because God has promised to bring all to the land of grace, He will, like a Good Shepherd, lead all men from the land of their own works, across the bridge of faith. Grace to all is the goal of history. Faith is the narrow bridge leading to that ultimate goal.

In the story of Abraham, we see that first came grace—God's promise. Second came Abraham's faith, for we read that he “believed in God.” By way of contrast, in the Mosaic covenant, God first required Israel to have faith in Him, to believe that their Deliverer was indeed the God of the Universe who was able to lead them to the Promised Land. Second came the works, the obedience that naturally followed their faith.

With Abraham, it was first *grace*, then *faith*.

With Moses, it was first *faith*, then *works* (obedience).

The interesting thing about faith is that it has characteristics of both God's sovereign grace and man's works. Paul associates it with God's sovereign grace by saying, as we read earlier in the second chapter of Ephesians:

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of

yourselves, *it is the gift of God;* ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

That is, faith itself is a gift from God and does not originate in the mind or will of man. Yet at the same time God must implant faith into the heart of man by means of His call, or voice, for faith comes only by “hearing” (Romans 11:17).

Faith calls for a response, a decision to follow God, made by the will of man, even as Moses asked Israel to decide. Thus, faith is the most sacred part of the Mosaic covenant and is, in essence, the wellspring of all our works of obedience. It is the first act of obedience toward the life of faith which we, like Israel of old, are expected to perform in our journey to the promised inheritance.

Thus, faith is the bridge between grace and works. Abraham begins with grace and leads us to faith; Moses begins with faith, and leads us to a life of obedience. Paul uses a unique Greek term in Romans 1:5 to express it. In the Concordant Version, it is translated “faith-obedience.” The word “obedience” is from the Greek word, *hupakoe*, which literally means “under hearing.” In fact, in both the Hebrew and the Greek, the word for “obey” is the same as “hear.” To hear is to obey. Without obedience, there is no true hearing.

Just as Abraham reveals God’s grace-faith to us, so also does Moses teach us the life of faith-obedience.

By pondering the wanderings of Israel under Moses, we see the manner in which God leads us as well from our faith decision to our perfection. It is the life of hearing the voice of God, which alone can increase our faith in Him. Each time we hear His voice and obey, whether we understand or not, we take another step toward maturity and grace, the Promised Land. The journey begins as an act of faith to follow God out of “Egypt,” and it ends with a final act of faith to enter Canaan. In between are the trials and testings that teach us to hear and obey the leading of the Spirit.

We know, of course, that there have been many in past millennia who lived and died without so much as beginning the journey to the Promised Land. Many have never heard of Jesus Christ and therefore had no opportunity to place their faith in His work on the Cross. They had no opportunity to learn to hear His voice. Others did have opportunity, but they rejected Jesus Christ, even as the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day rejected Him. These will all be judged according to their works by the divine law, that they might also learn righteousness.

Then, at the end of the final Age of the Ages, when the sinners have been disciplined and purified by the Divine Fire and have learned righteousness (Isaiah 26:9), when the Great Shepherd has constrained them in Love to cross the bridge of faith, then they too will be brought into the incorruptible state of God’s fullness, “*that God may be all in all*” (1 Cor. 15:28).

What a fantastic plan God has for His creation! I marvel daily at His wisdom. I revel in His love that gives purpose to His judgments. I stand in awe at His knowledge by which He was able to draw up such a plan from the beginning. And I give glory and magnify His power to carry out that plan without deviation down to the last detail. Romans 11:32-36.

³² For God has shut up [*sugkleio*, “locked up”] ALL in disobedience that He might show mercy to ALL. ³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? ³⁵ Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? ³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are ALL THINGS. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

The Effect of Adam's Sin on Man's Nature

We come now to a study on the effects of Adam's sin upon the souls of his descendants. The question we must first deal with is this: *Did Adam's sin cause us to have sinful souls or mortal souls?* This question sounds purely academic, but it has an enormous effect upon our lives. It is one of the most important questions in the Bible. We must of necessity become somewhat technical in our writing at this point; but I strongly urge you to read this section until you understand it thoroughly.

It is extremely important for us also to recognize that no man is born with a "sinful soul" or a "sin nature." In Romans 5:12 Paul explains this principle very clearly, though many church theologians have missed it:

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because [*eph' ho*, "on which"] all sinned—

Paul says here that sin first entered the world through Adam's sin. But what did "all men" inherit from Adam? Was it Adam's SIN that was passed down into all men? NO. *It was death, the liability for Adam's sin.*

In other words, man did not inherit a sin nature from Adam. He merely inherited the *liability* for Adam's sin. The reason we are mortal is because we are liable for a sin that Adam committed. And so we die, not as a result of our own sins, but as a result of Adam's original sin. Sinful souls are not passed down from generation to generation by procreation. The only thing passed down is MORTALITY, or Death.

We are not mortal because we sin. We sin because we are mortal. Which is the cause, and which is the result? Paul says at the end of Romans 5:12 that "*DEATH spread to all men,*" ON WHICH we ourselves sin. Death is the cause; our personal sins are committed as the result of death in us.

And so, the sequence of events is this: (1) Adam's original sin gave us (2) death, and this mortality is our weakness and the cause of (3) our individual sins.

The New American Standard Version of Romans 5:12 (quoted above) is simply incorrect. It reads: "*and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*" The translators would have us believe that death (mortality) spread to all men BECAUSE we sin. As if no man is mortal until he sins! We can point to millions of abortions to prove that babies are mortal BEFORE they sin.

How did this error in translation occur? It was because the translators did not understand that Paul was dealing with two different types of death in his writings: (1) mortality, which is the first death, and (2) the lake of fire, which is the second death. Paul

here is speaking of the FIRST death, mortality, which we inherited from Adam.

The Two Types of Death

Romans 5:12 says specifically that Adam's sin was imputed to all men, and as a direct result, "*death spread to all men.*" Paul repeats this concept in 1 Cor. 15:22, "*For as in Adam all DIE.*"

In chapter five we went into detail about how Adam's sin was *imputed* to all men, making us all liable for Adam's sin. This does not mean we are actually guilty of Adam's sin. We had nothing to do with it, for it was committed totally outside of ourselves. But God in His sovereignty *imputed* his sin to our accounts, calling what is not as though it were (Rom. 4:17). This would be a gross injustice; in fact, it would be a *false accusation* on God's part, except for the fact that Jesus came to impute His righteousness to our accounts as well. In so doing, He reversed entirely the effects of this "temporary injustice" (as I call it). And this is why it is so important that "all men" who died in Adam be saved in Christ. This is also Paul's conclusion in Romans 5:18.

¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

Our liability for Adam's sin simply makes us mortal in this age. And that mortality, death reigning over us in our souls and bodies, makes us morally sick or weak so that we are incapable of moral perfection. So long as we are mortal, we shall be corruptible. They go together (1 Cor. 15:53). Thus, our mortality itself is the cause of our individual sins, which God will deal with by means of the second death, the lake of fire.

The second death is distinct from the first death in two ways: (1) its purpose is to judge men for their own individual sins and to restore the lawful order; and (2) its timing is set for the age following the Tabernacles Age, when the unbelievers are thrown into the lake of fire.

There are two sins and two deaths spoken of in the Bible. The penalty for Adam's sin is the first death; God's judgment, lawful correction, and discipline for our own sins is the second death. No man will ever be cast into the lake of fire as judgment for Adam's sin. Adam's original (first) sin is judged by means of the first death; subsequently, our individual sins are judged by means of the second death.

This may seem self-evident and obvious to all, but unfortunately some theologians and Bible translators have run aground on this simple truth. In fact, this is why Romans 5:12 was mistranslated as early as 1600 years ago in Jerome's Latin Vulgate, and this error was brought over into the King James Version, the New American Standard, and many other English translations as well. To my knowledge, only The Concordant Version translates it correctly, "on which."

Jerome "Corrects" Paul's Theology

When Jerome translated the Latin Vulgate around 400 A.D., he rendered the last phrase of Rom. 5:12, "*because all have sinned.*" He had looked at verses such as Romans 6:23 and 5:21, where sin is the cause of death, and concluded that Paul must have made a mistake by saying that death was the cause of sin. And so, not understanding

that Paul was here talking about the first death, mortality, he simply tried to correct Paul’s mistake.

Yet even The Jerome Biblical Commentary, page 307, admits that this translation has a serious problem by making Paul contradict himself within the same verse:

“A difficulty often found with it is that it seems to make Paul say in 5:12c-d something contradictory to what he says in 12:a-b. In the beginning of the verse sin and death are ascribed to Adam; now death seems to be due to man’s deeds.”

And so for 1200 years while the Latin Vulgate reigned supreme as virtually the only Bible in Europe, the truth lay hidden in the Greek manuscripts far away in Constantinople. When that city fell to the Turks in the mid-1400’s thousands of Greek professors and theologians fled to the West, bringing their Greek Bibles with them. Soon an interest in Greek developed, which spawned the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation in the 1500’s. Eventually, this led to the King James Version, which was based largely on Greek texts.

Unfortunately, however, when the King James translators came to Romans 5:12, they were just as puzzled as Jerome was. They thought the “death” in this verse was “spiritual death,” rather than “physical death.” (These are inaccurate terms; the Bible calls them “the second death” and “mortality.”)

At any rate, this persistent misunderstanding made them follow Jerome’s error in reversing the cause and effect in this verse. The Greek phrase used is *eph’ ho*. *Eph’*, or *epi*, means “**on, upon, or over**.” Even English dictionaries give this meaning, because so many of our words beginning with “epi” are of Greek origin. The Greek word, *Ho*, means “which.” The phrase “on which” or “over which” denotes a consequence or result to follow.

To illustrate this, let us say, “I walked into a stumblingblock, **ON WHICH** I fell.” Did my fall cause the stumblingblock to exist? Of course not. Yet the New American Standard Version would have us render this: “I walked into a stumblinglock, **BECAUSE** I fell.” That is sheer nonsense. No translator should take it upon himself to turn the sentence around in order to suit his own understanding.

So we can easily see that the first death is the cause, and our sins are the result. We are mortal; therefore we sin. And because we sin as individuals, there is a lake of fire, a second death, to restore the lawful order to God’s universe. It is a place where men must pay the last farthing of debt to sin until the final Jubilee sets the creation free. Only those who appropriate Jesus’ payment for sin will avoid that second death entirely.

Paul’s Example Proves the Point

Paul gives us his own illustration to prove what he means in Romans 5:12. This should clarify all confusion, as we read in verses 13 and 14,

¹² . . . death spread to all men, **ON WHICH** all sinned— ¹³ for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Many people had sinned (personally) between the time of Adam and Moses. However, because the Law as such had not been given and actually ratified by the people until the time of Moses, their personal sins were not imputed to them. Nonetheless, men died during that whole time, proving that they were mortal not on account of their own sins, but on account of Adam's sin. This may seem like a strange way for Paul to prove his point, but it clearly shows us what Paul had in mind. It is Adam's sin that brings death to all men—not our own individual sins. In the day Adam sinned, he died (became mortal), and so we inherit that mortality.

And so this death is clearly shown to be the first death, not the second death. The theologians and translators who attempt to correct Paul's theology simply think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. Their lack of understanding brought them to conclude that man has a sinful soul, rather than a mortal soul that sins. This has given Christians a disproportionate sense of guilt that was often accompanied by a sense of hopelessness.

The Consequences of Each Viewpoint

If we look at the larger picture; if we see how this simple misunderstanding of the doctrine of imputation has negatively affected the whole view of God's plan of salvation, it might serve to shock us. Those Church leaders, like Augustine and Jerome, who did not understand Paul's statement in Romans 5:12, concluded that man received a sinful soul from Adam, rather than mortality. The theological term used by the Roman Church is that Adam's sin was "infused" or "transfused" into all mankind, giving us sinful souls. In the process of salvation, then, Jesus' righteousness is also "infused" or "transfused" into us, giving us righteous souls.

The logical conclusion drawn from this was that *only those who have perfect natures (like Christ) are truly saved*. The average Christian believer who still sinned was not yet saved. In fact, it is yet common thinking in the Roman Church, and in some Protestant Churches as well, that one must be perfect to be saved. True Christians, they say, are perfected, because the righteousness of Christ has been infused into them, even as Adam's sin had been infused into us prior to our conversion to Christ.

And so those honest Christians who know that they are still imperfect make the logical assumption that Christ's righteousness has not been infused into their natures. Therefore, they must not truly be "saved" yet. As a consequence, they are driven to asceticism and self-condemnation by guilt, never really knowing that they are truly righteous before God here and now, and continually trying to be good enough to know that God has given them an infusion of righteousness.

The bottom line is that in theory they believe salvation is by faith, but in practice they base their salvation on works, because they are driven by guilt to do enough good works to know that they have truly been perfected. Most of them simply give up after a time, believing that it is impossible for them to achieve salvation in this life. The Roman Church has given these people a secondary hope of purgatory, where the average Christian may be perfected in an afterlife, prior to going to heaven.

Having talked with many Roman Catholics about this very issue, I have seen how many of them are racked by guilt, condemnation, and feelings of spiritual inferiority. My

heart goes out to them, for most of them truly desire the righteousness of God, but Church theology has created a climate of guilt, defeat, and discouragement. Many give up altogether and decide to enjoy life while they can. So long as they remain members of the Church, they have been told that they will ultimately be saved, even if their present sins sentence them to a longer stay in purgatory.

The truth is this: When Adam fell, his sin was *imputed* to us, NOT infused. To impute means, according to Romans 4:17, calling what is NOT as though it were. When Adam’s sin was imputed to us, God called us ALL sinners, as though we had all sinned. As a consequence, we all became liable for Adam’s sin. The penalty was death, or mortality. Hence, we were all made mortal because of Adam’s sin, as Paul makes clear in Romans 5:12.

Therefore, also, in dealing with our salvation, Christ’s righteousness was likewise *imputed* to us, as Paul says in Romans 4:22-24,

²² Therefore also it [i.e., his faith] was reckoned [*logizomai*, “imputed”] to him [Abraham] as righteousness. ²³ Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned [“imputed”] to him, ²⁴ but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned [“imputed”], as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

In other words, by faith the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. God is calling what is NOT as though it were. We are not actually righteous at present, because we are still weak, due to our mortality. Yet legally in the eyes of God we are perfect. We have been forgiven of our sins, because we have been washed clean by the blood of the Lamb of God. Now when we sin, John instructs us to acknowledge and confess our sins (1 John 1:7-10). In fact, he says,

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Our understanding of the effects of Adam’s sin on our own nature will have a tremendous impact upon our lives. It will determine whether we have the peace of mind to know we are truly the children of God, or if we labor every day under a load of guilt.

CHAPTER 10

The Restoration of All Nations

In the second chapter of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a prophetic dream about a huge image having a head of gold, arms of silver, belly of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. Daniel interpreted the dream, telling the king that the different parts of the image represented earthly kingdoms. The head of gold represented Babylon itself, which was the current world power at the time. Later, the kingdom of Medo-Persia was to arise and conquer Babylon. This new kingdom was prophesied by the two arms of silver.

After this, the bronze belly nation of Greece, led by Alexander the Great, would conquer Medo-Persia. Still later, the iron empire of Rome became the dominant world empire. Rome was later divided into two sections, East and West. The Eastern Roman Empire was ruled from a city in Asia Minor called Constantinople, often called “New Rome.” The Western Roman Empire was, of course, ruled from “Old Rome” in Italy.

The Western Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D. and the power vacuum was largely filled by the Bishop of Rome, ruling first by the power of religion, and later also by political and military might. It is generally understood that the feet of iron mixed with clay had to do with the time of the middle ages and the rule of the Roman Church as an extension of the Western Roman Empire itself. The Eastern Roman Empire gradually lost power to the Saracens and Ottomans until finally, Constantinople itself fell in 1453 A.D.

While there are diverse views regarding the precise fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, it is clear that the various metals represent the different political phases of a succession of world empires. The fact that all these empires are depicted in a single image in the dream tells us how God views them. They are different empires, certainly, yet they represent a unified period of time with a beginning and an end.

At the end of the time of these empires, a stone was to be cut out of the mountain that would hit the image on its feet and begin to grind the entire image to powder. Man’s system of world empires would then blow away in the wind, leaving only the stone, which grows until it fills the whole earth. Some say that the stone represents Jesus Christ, but Daniel 2:44 interprets the stone to be the Kingdom of God.

⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

In other words, the day is coming when the Kingdom of God will replace the kingdoms of men. The earth will be ruled in righteousness by the laws of God, rather than by the injustices and often arbitrary and contradictory laws of men. Revelation 11:15 speaks of a day when all these earthly nations will be annexed by the Kingdom of God.

¹⁵ And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in

heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

All Nations Will Turn to God

So often we read the Psalms without really understanding the meaning of these words or their prophetic significance. Having in mind the Biblical vision of all nations in submission to Jesus Christ in His Kingdom, let us look at some of these Psalms, beginning with Psalm 66:4,

⁴ All the earth will worship Thee, and will sing praises to Thee; they will sing praises to Thy name. Selah.

Psalm 67 is magnificent as well:

¹ God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. ² That Thy way may be known on the earth, *Thy salvation among all nations*. ³ Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let ALL the peoples praise Thee. ⁴ Let *the nations* be glad and sing for joy; for Thou wilt judge the peoples with uprightness, and guide *the nations on the earth*. Selah. ⁵ Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee. ⁶ The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. ⁷ *God blesses us*, [in order] *that all the ends of the earth may fear Him*.

Psalm 72:11-19 says,

¹¹ And let *all kings* bow down before him, *All nations serve him*. . . ¹⁷ May His Name endure forever; May His Name increase as long as the sun shines; And let *men* bless themselves by Him; Let *all nations* call him blessed. . . ¹⁸ Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who alone works wonders. ¹⁹ And blessed be His glorious name forever; And *may the whole earth be filled with His glory*. Amen, and Amen.

Psalm 86:9 and 10 says,

⁹ *All nations* whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord; and they shall glorify Thy name. ¹⁰ For Thou art great and doest wondrous deeds; Thou alone art God.

The day is coming when all nations will see that the path to liberty, peace, and prosperity is in making Jesus Christ their King and adopting the divine law as the law of the land. One by one, all nations on earth will do this, until His Kingdom fills the whole earth like the great mountain range foretold by the prophet Daniel (2:35). Isaiah foresaw this day as well when he wrote in Isaiah 2:2-4,

² Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains [i.e., nations], and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. ³ And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the

LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.

This will be the great Sabbath Millennium upon the earth, where God declares a time of rest from the labor imposed upon all nations because of Adam's sin. The purpose of a Sabbath is not to be a time of idleness, but to free us to be about our Father's business. It is the time of learning the ways of God, not merely a few individuals or small groups of Churches here and there, but for the whole earth.

The Fall of Jericho

The story of the fall of Jericho is a prophetic type of the fall of Babylon. That is, the story of Jericho's fall is prophetic of the fall of the great Babylon in Revelation 17-19. The similarities are striking when one studies them. In Joshua's conquest of Jericho, God told him to march around the city six days, blowing rams' horns. On the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times, and then shout against the city. When they did so, an earthquake struck the city, the walls fell, and the city was conquered.

In the book of Revelation we find that the city of Babylon was to fall in like manner. There are seven seals, and the seventh seal is comprised of seven trumpets. There are seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet is comprised of seven bowls, or vials. Only then does Babylon fall, conquered by the Kingdom of God.

It is obvious that the overthrow of man's oppressive and arbitrary systems of law and government are a divine declaration of a Jubilee. The main purpose of a Jubilee is to set people free from every form of bondage. So it is self-evident that the fall of Babylon in the book of Revelation is a Jubilee.

The seven seals represent the seven church ages that comprise the Pentecostal Age. The seventh seal is the final "day" of the fall of Babylon (or Jericho). During that final "day," there are seven trumpets. In the law God instructed the priest to blow the trumpet on every new moon, the beginning of each month, to mark the calendar and count the months. And so the seven trumpets properly represent the seven months leading to the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar.

In the seventh month is the Feast of Tabernacles, during which time the priest poured out a drink offering of the new wine as a firstfruits offering to God (Num. 29:16). Since the Feast of Tabernacles was a seven-day feast, there were seven bowls, or vials, of wine poured out as an offering to celebrate this feast in the seventh month. And so we see that the Hebrew calendar forms the basic framework of the book of Revelation. The Feast of Tabernacles carries a prophetic undertone, depicting the fall of Babylon that will set the nations free.

This also explains why God instructed the priests to sacrifice seventy bullocks during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. 29:12-34). Seventy is the universal number, representing all the nations of the earth. Alfred Edersheim says on page 277 of his book, The Temple,

"There were seventy bullocks, to correspond to the number of the seventy nations of the

world.”

In Genesis 10 the sons of Noah are said to father the beginnings of the various nations, and the list mentions seventy nations in all.

We conclude, then, that the Feast of Tabernacles was prophetic of the work God would do with regard to all nations of the earth. The book of Revelation explains in great details how to interpret the law regarding these seventy bullocks at Tabernacles. Even as the sacrifice of the lamb was fulfilled in Christ, the true Lamb of God, on our behalf, so also the slaughter of the bullocks was fulfilled in Christ on behalf of the nations of the world. Essentially, it prophesies the restoration of all things.

The Jubilee Trumpet at Jericho

In the story of the fall of Jericho, hidden five times within the text of Joshua 6, is the Jubilee. It is usually overlooked because the translators have mistranslated the Hebrew word, *yobel*, “rams’ horns” instead of “Jubilee.”

⁴ Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns [*yobel*, “Jubilee”] before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

⁵ And it shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, [*yobel*, “Jubilee”] and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead. . . .

⁶ So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns [*yobel*, “Jubilee”] before the ark of the LORD."

⁷ Then he said to the people, "Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the LORD."

⁸ And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns [*yobel*, “Jubilee”] before the LORD went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. . . .

¹³ And the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns [*yobel*, “Jubilee”] before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while they continued to blow the trumpets.

These verses literally tell us that the priests carried the seven trumpets of the Jubilee. It is most unfortunate that the translators did not see the importance of conveying the concept of the Jubilee in their translations. It would have shown the Church that the ultimate fulfillment of the Jubilee is not a single day or a single trumpet, but a time of seven trumpets over a period of seven days. The Jubilee trumpet was supposed to be sounded on the Day of Atonement, but the Jubilee itself was merely the preparation day for the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a seven-day feast. The story of the fall of Jericho, combined with the book of Revelation, shows us their prophetic significance.

It appears that we today are at the end of the Pentecostal Age and are in the time of the seventh trumpet. The seven bowls are being poured out at the beginning of this Tabernacles Age. Even though the walls of the city are yet standing firm, the day will soon come when God's great earthquake will shake all things, and nothing will be left standing that is not part of His Kingdom. (Haggai 2:6, 7; Heb. 13:26-28).

God Wants All the Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Iron

In Joshua 6:19 the Israelites were given instructions regarding the spoils of war when God delivered the city into their hands.

¹⁹ But all the *silver* and *gold* and articles of *bronze* and *iron* are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.

God required all the gold, silver, bronze, and iron for His treasury from the city of Jericho. These metals signify all the nations of the earth, even as they do in the book of Daniel. This requirement in Joshua 6 prophesies that all the kingdoms of this world will come into God's "treasury," that is, His Kingdom (Rev. 11:15). This law of gold and silver and its significance is repeated in Haggai 2:8 and 9,

⁸ "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," declares the LORD of hosts. ⁹ "The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts, "and in this place I shall give peace," declares the LORD of hosts.

Jesus Christ is destined to be King of kings and Lord of lords. He is destined to be worshipped by "*every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them,*" (Rev. 5:13). The purpose of God's judgment is to correct and refine these metals, in order that God may bring even His enemies into His treasury, thereby abolishing death itself and becoming all in all.

Jericho Devoted to God

Joshua 6:17 (NASV) also tells us that the city of Jericho and all of its inhabitant were "*under the ban.*" The King James Version says the city was "accursed." The margin says it is "devoted." To understand the significance of Jericho's devotion, we must first pause to study the law of devotion.

The Hebrew word is *cherem*, which is from the root word, *charam*. These words are difficult to translate into English. It means that it is to be given to God and cannot be purchased or redeemed out of His possession. It was to be used for God's purposes alone. The law regarding things "devoted" is found in Leviticus 27:28 and 29:

²⁸ Nevertheless, anything which a man sets apart to the LORD out of all that he has, of man or animal or of the fields of his own property, shall not be sold or redeemed. *Anything devoted to destruction is most holy to the LORD.* ²⁹ No one who may have been set apart among men shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death.

In other words, once something has been "devoted" to God, it can ever be taken away from Him, nor will God ever sell it or exchange it for any money or property. For example, Jesus spoke of such people in John 10:27-29,

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and *no one shall snatch them out of My hand.* ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand.

These sheep belong to Jesus, given to Him by the Father. They are “devoted” to Him; therefore, they cannot be snatched out of His hand. They are consecrated to Him. They are part of His Bride, because the Hebrew word, *charam*, is where the word “harem” is derived. They are not devoted to death and destruction, but unto life. *They are the ones who have died voluntarily to their own self-will out of love for Him.* Like Jesus, they are a lamb company; they have the character of the Lamb of God, who laid down His life willingly for others.

With this background in the law of devoted ones, we see the underlying meaning of Jericho's devotion to God. The city was devoted to destruction, but God claimed all the gold, silver, bronze, and iron. These metals represent the people who are citizens of the kingdoms of this world. They are to be devoted to destruction, certainly, but it is the destruction of the flesh, so that the people might be saved and go into God's treasury. The unbelievers are devoted to the lake of fire, in order that they might be tried and purified seven times and made fit for God's use in His Temple.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 pictures this devotion to destruction in terms of the stone grinding the image to powder. Joshua pictures it as being devoted to the treasury of God. The book of Revelation says the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. If we look at all these themes in the various ways they are portrayed, we will see that they all point to the restoration of all things, where all nations come to worship Jesus Christ. This occurs at the fall of Babylon, after they are set free by the Jubilee in the Age of Tabernacles.

The Achan Doctrine

During the battle of Jericho, a man named Achan took silver, gold, and a Babylonish garment from Jericho and buried them in the ground under this tent (Joshua 7:21). He stole that which was “devoted” to God. As a result, Israel lost the next battle against the city of Ai, and 36 men of Israel were killed. Joshua prayed to know why this disaster had befallen them, and God told him that there was sin in the camp. He investigated the matter and found that Achan had not given God all the devoted things. Joshua 7:25 and 26 says,

²⁵ And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. ²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor ["trouble"] to this day.

The Achan Doctrine is the idea that these “enemies” of God, the citizens of Jericho or Babylon, ought to be annihilated, buried in the ground, or burned in hell in

punishment for their sins. Achan buried the gold and silver under his tent. This was stealing from God, because God has laid claim to all the spoils of this war. Furthermore, Achan also stole a Babylonish garment. This, too, has prophetic significance. It indicates that Achan desired to retain a part of Babylonish thinking. He preferred the Babylonish garment to the garments of salvation mentioned in Isaiah 61:10 and 11.

¹⁰ I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise To spring up before all the nations.

This is the same chapter from which Jesus quoted at the beginning of His ministry to indicate His calling to set the captives free. The chapter is part of Isaiah's commentary on the law of Jubilee. It is, therefore, linked to the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, or "Booths." The Hebrew word translated Booths or Tabernacles is *sukkoth*. Its root is *sukka*, which is also a bridal canopy. It represents the clothing of righteousness that is the ultimate reward of the believer, portrayed in Jesus' transfiguration.

Achan was a type of man who would give up the reward of transfiguration in the Feast of Tabernacles, rather than give up his Babylonian garment—the doctrine that God should not have all the gold and silver (people) of the world.

The Door of Hope

Hosea 2:15 prophesies that some day the valley of Achor ("Trouble") would become "*a door of hope*." The valley of Achor was the place where Achan was stoned (Joshua 7:26) for stealing the gold and silver from the spoils of Jericho. Hosea shows that the story of Achan was prophetic and had a future fulfillment. It was connected to the time of Israel's trouble, when they were to be cast out of the land by God's judgment. The door of hope was Israel's restoration to God, and this was based in part on the Noahic covenant God made with every living creature in the ninth chapter of Genesis. Hence, we read in Hosea 2:18,

¹⁸ In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, And will make them lie down in safety.

If this is the case, then we see the Achan Doctrine as an anti-restoration teaching. The second Joshua (Jesus) will come with Urim and Thummim and will identify this troubling doctrine. And when He does, the people will go to that tent and find the stolen silver and gold, and bring all things to the feet of Joshua. God has purposed to be "*all in all*" (1 Cor. 15:28), and no man can withstand it (Romans 9:19).

The exclusive and narrow view of salvation, the Achan of today, will be identified and destroyed by the revelation of truth. The solution to Achan in the Valley of Achor will also be a door of hope to the whole world, for all the treasures of the earth will be brought to Joshua and be restored to God's storehouse.

The Restoration of the Iron Axe Head

The prophet Elisha was the head of a school of prophets in ancient Israel. Elisha was the successor to Elijah. He had asked for, and received, the double portion of the Spirit that had been upon Elijah (2 Kings 2:9). As a consequence, whereas there are eight miracles recorded and attributed to Elijah, there are sixteen attributed to Elisha. Eight is the number of new beginnings, but sixteen is the number of love. Elijah prepared the way for Elisha, even as John prepared the way for Jesus to establish a new beginning in the earth. Yet the way is prepared so that the love of God to be extended in the salvation of all men.

One of Elisha's miracles was to restore an iron ax head that had been lost in the Jordan River. The story is found in 2 Kings 6:1-7.

¹ Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "Behold now, the place before you where we are living is too limited for us. ² Please let us go to the Jordan, and each of us take from there a beam, and let us make a place there for ourselves where we may live." So he said, "Go." ³ Then one said, "Please be willing to go with your servants." And he answered, "I shall go." ⁴ So he went with them; and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. ⁵ But as one was felling a beam, *the axe head fell into the water*; and he cried out and said, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed." ⁶ Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed him the place, *he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float.* ⁷ And he said, "Take it up for yourself." So he put out his hand and took it.

I believe the iron in this story represents not only the iron kingdom of Rome, but by extension the entire Babylonian succession of empires. Even as the iron axe had cut down trees, so also the Roman Empire subdued many nations. Nations are often symbolized by trees in the Scriptures. One of the "trees" that Rome subdued was the nation of Judah. But out of that tree came forth a Branch—Jesus Christ—who would be cast into the Jordan River (death) in order to restore the iron, the kingdoms of this world.

The kingdoms of this world are devoted to destruction, even as the iron axe head fell into the Jordan River. But they are saved by Jesus Christ, represented in the story by Elisha, a type of Christ. He saves them by applying the wooden branch, or tree, to the river. This signifies the Cross, with Jesus' death being applied to the waters, which represent "*peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*" Revelation 17:15 says,

¹⁵ . . . The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

This brief story of Elisha is a beautiful picture of the restoration of all things and the subduing of all nations under the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. In that it is miracle twelve out of the sixteen that Elisha performed, it deals with the establishment of divine government in the earth.

The Ministry of the Conciliation

I believe that we are near to entering the Promised Land of the Tabernacles Age. The day is fast approaching and now is when our Joshua-Jesus is ready to expose the great Achan Doctrine which troubles Israel. Like those who were sent to Achan's tent to uncover the buried gold and silver, we too are called to bring these things to light and to bring the devoted things into His treasury.

There is no place in Scripture where we are called to enter a ministry where we preach eternal torment to the people. As we have seen in chapter 8, this is, in fact, the Doctrine of Achan. It is directly opposed to the ministry of the conciliation, which Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation [*katallasso*, “conciliation”], ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling [“conciliating”] the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation [“conciliation”]. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled [“conciliated”] to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

You will notice that we have changed the translation from reconciliation to conciliation. This needs some explanation. There are two Greek words, both of which the New American Standard Bible has translated reconciliation: *katallaso* and *apo-katallaso*. These words are related but slightly different. You may see the correct translations by reading The Concordant Version.

If two people are enemies and are separated by some dispute, they need to be reconciled one to another. But if just one of those people takes it upon himself to drop the case and forgive the other, raising the white flag of truce, a conciliation has just occurred. A conciliation is a one-sided peace, done outside the will or knowledge of the second party. It is done by the council of his own will in the secret chambers of his governmental palace.

He who has conciliated his brother then sends his ambassador with the white flag of truce to sue for peace, to beg the other to conciliate in return. If he does so, then it is two-sided; it is a reconciliation.

In 2 Corinthians 5 (above) we find that God has conciliated the world to Himself. He laid aside his righteous and lawful case which he had against the world and conciliated the world. Then He sent us Christians into the world as His ambassadors to them to beg them to be conciliated to God in return. All who take heed and make peace with God are reconciled to Him. This is confirmed by Romans 5:10 and 11,

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled [“conciliated”] to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled [“conciliated”], we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we

have now received the reconciliation ["conciliated"].

While we were still sinners and fighting against God, Christ died for us. In other words, this conciliation took place BEFORE the reconciliation, because God took it upon Himself to act first. Paul uses these terms carefully. This can easily be seen in the three passages where he uses the term *apo-katallaso*, or reconciliation. The first is in Ephesians 2:16.

¹⁶ And might reconcile [*apo-katallaso*] them BOTH in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Paul was speaking of the "wall of partition" that had separated Israel from the "Gentiles." Since he speaks of BOTH parties being reconciled, he uses the proper word, *apo-katallaso*. The other two examples are in Colossians 1:20-22.

²⁰ And through Him to reconcile [*apo-katallaso*] all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven. ²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled [*apo-katallaso*] you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--

Paul simply says that God's purpose is to reconcile all things to Himself. That means BOTH parties are to make peace. In the passage above, Paul speaks to the Christians in Colosse who had in turn conciliated God; and thus there was a mutual reconciliation between them.

In 2 Corinthians 5 (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) Paul explains to the Christians that they have been called as ambassadors of Christ to a ministry of conciliation. That is, Christians have been entrusted with a message to give to the world. It is NOT a word of hellfire and brimstone. It is NOT the bad news of the damned. It is the good news "*that God was in Christ conciliating THE WORLD to Himself, not counting their trespasses against THEM.*"

Certainly, there may be a time when God calls someone to give someone or a nation a word of warning of impending judgment. However, this is not the overall message that Christians have been called to give the world at large. And yet we often find that the gospel, which means "good news," has been altered by a misunderstanding of God's purpose and plan to both justify and reconcile all men unto Himself.

I used to be of the opinion that it was my Christian duty to convince others that they were sinners and in danger of God's wrath. After learning of God's plan to restore all men and conciliate the world, I began to share these things with the unbelievers. I was surprised at how quickly they responded to God's word and became very excited about getting to know God. I found that these people joyfully repented of their sin and turned to God out of a heart of love. They were overawed at the wisdom and knowledge of God. They rejoiced at the justice and mercy of God. Their lives were changed forever by the power of love and forgiveness.

Until the Church understands the ministry of the conciliation, it will enjoy only

limited success in converting the world. Many will respond to God out of fear of hell, but vast numbers will reject God as well. Fear is a good motivator, but love is better. Even so, we are not here to discuss tactics, but to find the truth. I believe that the truth of the conciliation will be the impetus for the final great world revival that will sweep the earth in the Tabernacles Age. Jesus Christ will not need to FORCE the nations into submission, for once they come to know Him, He will prove to be “the desire of all nations” (Haggai 2:7, KJV). Revelation 15:4 poses the question,

⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; For all the nations will come and worship before Thee, for Thy righteous acts have been revealed.

The Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

It is, perhaps, because of the idea of the total depravity of man, that Christians often believe that unbelievers willfully hate God. This is really not the case. For the most part, unbelievers simply do not know Him and do not know how to contact him. Even after they hear of Jesus Christ, many are afraid of Him, because they heard Him preached by a spirit of judgment and fear. This often gives people the wrong impression of Him, and they tend to think of Jesus Christ as just another tyrant to fear and to avoid if possible.

I really believe that to know Him is to love Him. When Jesus walked the earth, the people were drawn to Him by His love and concern for them. Whenever Christians have manifested that same love and concern, and especially whenever God has confirmed His word with signs following, the masses flock to hear of Jesus. Such people do not hate Jesus Christ; they simply do not know Him and are awaiting some of His disciples to show them by example the character and works of Jesus. The day is coming when this will occur on a fairly large scale. I believe this will explode upon the earth with the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. That is when Jesus' words will be fulfilled, when He said in John 14:12,

¹² Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and *greater works than these shall he do*; because I go to the Father.

When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit in His place to indwell us and, as it says, to give us the spiritual gifts and ministries that Paul discusses in Ephesians 4:7 and 8,

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."

Paul was quoting from Psalm 68:17 and 18, where we find a description of the first Pentecost under Moses at Mount Sinai.

¹⁷ The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them *as at Sinai*, in holiness. ¹⁸ Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captive *Thy* captives; Thou hast received gifts among men, Even *among the rebellious also*, that the LORD GOD may

dwell *there*.

Even as Moses ascended the mount to receive the divine law as a gift to men, so also did Jesus Christ ascend into heaven and return in the form of the Holy Spirit in order to give gifts to men. He came to write His law upon our hearts, rather than on stone tablets. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:11-13,

¹¹ And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Psalm 68:18, quoted earlier, says that these gifts are for “*the rebellious also, that the LORD GOD may dwell there.*” The purpose of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was for the benefit of the rebellious—not to confirm them in their rebellion, but so that they too would become fit for God’s habitation. That is, they would begin to be cleansed and purified until they came to be spiritually mature “*to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*”

The Scriptures clearly teach that man in his death-ridden state is at enmity with God and in need of reconciliation. Jesus Christ came to earth, shed His blood, and was raised from the dead in order to conciliate all nations. His blood, His power, and His love will draw all the peoples of the earth to Himself.

We are ambassadors of the greatest message the world has ever heard.

CHAPTER 11

Predestination and Election

In the time of the New Testament, there were three main religious parties in Judea, and each differed in their teaching on predestination. The **Essenes** believed totally in predestination and totally rejected the idea of free will. Opposed to them were the **Sadducees**, who had been heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. Like the Epicureans, they denied not only predestination but even the existence of angels, any spirit, and the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). Josephus tells us that the Sadducees believed in total free will (*Antiq.* XIII, v). The **Pharisees**, on the other hand, stood in the middle, believing partly in predestination and partly in free will, saying that God “helps” men to do good.

All of these form a backdrop for Paul’s teaching in Romans 9, for surely all these teachings were well known to Paul. Thus, he is not likely to be ambiguous in his words, for the issues were quite clearly defined already in his day. In this context, he says in the ninth chapter of Romans:

⁹ For this is a word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." ¹⁰ And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹ for though *the twins* were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to *His* choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

So we see that Paul takes the case of Jacob and Esau as prime examples of God’s Election, showing that God chose them BEFORE either of them had done either good or evil. Keep in mind that these are Paul’s *examples* to prove the doctrine; they are not exceptions to the rule. So Esau was NOT rejected on the basis of his evil works, nor was Jacob elected on account of any good works. God is said to have chosen them before birth in order to prove to us that it was NOT “of works” but only “of Him that calleth.”

Election therefore means that God is causing, and man is responding to that causal force. This is so clear that we cannot deviate from the plain meaning without doing cartwheels in a swamp. The big objection, both for the Greeks and for the Sadducees, was that of maintaining God’s justice. Paul was well aware of this, and so he continues in Romans 9:

¹⁴ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For

this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."

¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Here Paul goes into further detail, though he does not really answer the question of God's justice. Instead, he quotes another Bible story to prove that election determines men's actions. Men may have what they think is "free will," but in reality it is a *coerced will*. Because Pharaoh had been raised up to glorify God as a vessel of dishonour (9:21), his "free will" was hardly free. God's will was higher and prior to Pharaoh's. Before Pharaoh was even born, God had determined the purpose of his life. It was to glorify God by providing a backdrop for Moses, who was the corresponding vessel of mercy.

One can read the entire story of Pharaoh in the first part of Exodus. Before Moses even appeared to Pharaoh, God had told him that he would harden Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh would not listen to him (Exodus 7:3, 4, 13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32, etc.). Every time Pharaoh tried to repent and let Israel go, God would harden his heart (Ex. 10:16, 20, 27). Our natural sense of justice cries out against this. How could God treat Pharaoh or any man that way? How could God then judge Pharaoh for sin? Surely either Paul is wrong, or else we are totally misunderstanding Paul's words! But wait; Paul anticipates these very objections, for they had already been raised many times in his own day. So he continues in Romans 9:

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

Yes, that is precisely most people's objection. In fact, there would be no objection at all if Paul had only been teaching that God "foreknew" all things. If God had made Esau and Pharaoh into vessels of dishonor on the grounds that He "knew beforehand" how they would turn out, then why would anyone object to Paul's teaching? The very fact that Paul well understood the objection and yet did NOT use the term "foreknew" (Greek: *proginosko*) compels us to believe the obvious—he meant *predestination*. That is, God had determined these events beforehand.

And so the reader is compelled to object to God's "unjust" treatment of Pharaoh. If the underlying cause of Pharaoh's hardness of heart were really God's election and predestination, it would appear to undermine any legal case that God might have against Pharaoh. It is what we today would call "entrapment." It would be totally unjust to make Pharaoh pay for the sins he committed under such circumstances. How could God do such things and yet remain just? That is the real question. Romans 9:20-23 continues,

²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use? ²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

This does not seem to be a satisfactory answer, for Paul only reminds us that such an attitude is one of pride, thinking we are more just than God. Yet we must understand that Paul had already laid the basis for God's justice in Romans five, where he plainly taught that God planned to save all of mankind in the end.

If God had indeed predestined most of humanity to burn in an eternal fire, then yes, indeed, God would be unjust. Only a few with strong stomachs have ever believed this, among whom are Augustine and Calvin. Yet for the majority of men, this has been unacceptable, and other solutions were needed. Unfortunately, instead of questioning the Achan Doctrine of eternal torment, most doubted the doctrine of election and predestination!

And so this has been a confusing mess for most people all their lives. First, they have been deceived by thinking that "hell" is everlasting, rather than age-abiding (*aeonian*); then to compensate for this error, they must twist Paul's words in Romans 9 to try to justify God. It is no wonder that most people think that Romans 9 is so "difficult" to understand. It is only difficult if one has a prior assumption in his mind that these non-elect will burn forever in a fiery hell. It is always difficult to try to explain how God could use His sovereignty to establish a horrible injustice.

In Romans 8 we are told that God Himself subjected all creation to futility, not so that it would be destroyed, but so that He would receive glory and praise at its jubilee.

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Most people object to the doctrine of predestination because it is linked to the idea that God has predestinated most of humanity to burn in hell forever. They object to the injustice attributed to God. Such people are to be commended for not wanting to believe in such an unjust God. However, the God of the Bible has merely predestinated certain ones to be saved FIRST. The others are predestinated to be saved LATER.

Meanwhile, there is much "futility" in creation. God subjected creation to futility by His own will. It was a judgment of God upon all creation because of Adam's sin. Yet He did so with a good purpose in mind, because God's judgments are remedial and corrective. Through discipline, God will bring all things to Himself. That which we call evil, God has the power to turn into good, even as Romans 8:28 says,

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

A good illustration of this verse is found in a story I heard recently. There was a king in Africa who had a close friend that he grew up with. The friend had a habit of looking at every situation that ever occurred in his life (positive or negative) and remarking, "This is good!"

One day the king and his friend were out on a hunting expedition. The friend would load and prepare the guns for the king. The friend had apparently done something wrong in preparing one of the guns, for after taking the gun from his friend, the king fired it and his thumb was blown off. Examining the situation the friend remarked as usual, "This is good!" To which the king replied, "No, this is NOT good!" and proceeded to send his friend to jail.

About a year later, the king was hunting in an unsafe area. Cannibals captured him and took them to their village. They tied his hands, stacked some wood, set up a stake and bound him to the stake. As they came near to set fire to the wood, they noticed that the king was missing a thumb. Being superstitious, they never ate anyone that was less than whole. So untying the king, they sent him on his way. As he returned home, he was reminded of the event that had taken his thumb and felt remorse for his treatment of his friend. He went immediately to the jail to speak with his friend.

"You were right" he said, "it was good that my thumb was blown off." And he proceeded to tell the friend all that had just happened. "And so I am very sorry for sending you to jail for so long. It was bad for me to do this."

"No," his friend replied, "this is good!"

"What do you mean, 'this is good'! How could it be good that I sent my friend to jail for a year?"

"If I had NOT been in jail, I would have been with you!"

When we learn to view all things through the eyes of God, then will we truly know Him. The true knowledge of God begins with a recognition of His sovereignty. The more we know Him, the more sovereign He seems to be. The less we know Him, the more sovereign man seems to be.

Elsewhere in Paul's writings, he confirms the doctrine of election. In Ephesians 1:4-6,

⁴ Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Even as Jacob was elected before his birth, that God's choice might stand not of works—so also were we chosen in Him "*before the foundation of the world.*" We are predestinated and chosen "*according to the kind intention of His will*" (vs. 5) to be saved first and bring the nations to Christ. Paul says it again in 2 Timothy 1:9,

⁹ Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity ["before times eonian"].

Paul also writes in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "*God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation.*" If we had not been chosen, God may have decreed that we should be born in an idolatrous nation, where the name of Christ had never been heard. If so, our chances of being Christians today would be somewhere between slim and nil. No matter how we

slice it, our cultural and religious background, the time and place we are born, and many other factors all make it easy or difficult to find Christ. These are factors outside of our control, determined by the sovereignty of God alone. From a human viewpoint, this is simply not fair, especially if it results in eternal torment for 99% of mankind.

If God were to be fair about it, then He should do with everyone as he did with the Apostle Paul. Who among us would argue with God after being struck down with a blinding light, with Jesus appearing to us face to face? It reminds me of a cartoon I once saw, where a medieval crusader on his horse was pointing his lance at the throat of a Muslim lying on his back. The Muslim was saying, “Hmm, please tell me more about this God of yours!” In the same manner, God also got Paul’s undivided attention. If God had coerced every man in this way, I suspect that most of the world would have been evangelized and converted long ago.

Years after his conversion, Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:16 that his own conversion was “*an example* [hupotuposis, “a pattern”] for *those who would believe in Him for eternal life*.” Obviously, this does not mean that God will strike all people to the ground in such a violent manner in order to convert them. Yet it does teach the principle that it is God who first elects us from the foundation of the world, and then He follows through by causing us to accept Him. Paul here is the PATTERN, not the exception. No flesh can glory in His sight. We will not be able to strut our salvation before men, saying “I accepted Christ by my own free will.” Ultimately, we will all have to humbly agree that, like Paul, He chose us before we chose Him.

When any man receives enlightenment of the Truth, it is an act of God. Paul learned this by personal experience, and such a dramatic event had a tremendous impact upon his view of God’s election. We must keep this in mind as we read Romans 9, for Paul wrote this chapter as a result of his own personal experience. Some other Scriptures reflecting this are:

Matt. 11:27. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and *anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*

2 Tim. 2:25. ²⁵ With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps *God may grant them repentance* leading to the knowledge of the truth,

Rom. 2:4. ⁴ Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing *that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?*

John 6:37. ³⁷ *All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

John 6:44. ⁴⁴ No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws (*helkuo*, “drags”) him.

John 1:13. ¹³ Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God [i.e., God’s will].

Having thus established the God is sovereign, we will now begin to show the paradox that man's will also has authority on the earthly level.

Man's Will and its Authority

In the Greek language there are two words that we must look at carefully: *dunamis* and *exousia*. The word *dunamis* means "inherent power," that is, power that is self-derived. A king is said to have *dunamis* (power) OVER others. To his subjects, the king has power. But in relation to God (a higher Power), the king operates on *exousia* (authority). In the family, a husband has power over the wife, but in relation to God the husband only exercises authority under God. It is all relative.

Power, or sovereignty, is what one sees when he looks up from his own level of authority. Every man exercises *power over* some area of life, and yet that same power is only *authority under* a higher power. Every man exercises authority under a succession of higher authorities, until finally one reaches God Himself, the ultimate and only true sovereign Power of the universe.

In our discussion of man's will, we shall simplify things by ignoring all positions of power or authority except where God is the sovereign Power (*dunamis*), and man in general exercises authority (*exousia*) under God. It all began in Genesis 1:26.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

This is the beginning of all delegated authority on earth in its primal form. Later, as men began to multiply, he formed more layers of government, each with a different level of authority. Each new authority served to limit man's "free will" further, for now he was bound by more and more laws to restrain him from injuring his neighbor. His will was increasingly coerced by law.

Law and Coercion

A law that has no corresponding judgment or penalty for its infraction is really no law at all. The law must operate on the fear principle to restrain sinners. For this reason, Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:9 and 10,

⁹ Realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers ¹⁰ and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

Only when we are perfected will the law become irrelevant insofar as legislation is concerned. At that point, men will by nature do good; they will be totally motivated by love; and fear itself will be a thing of the past.

Laws are given specifically for the purpose of coercion. On earth, man's will has not been free since the first enforceable law was set down. Whether this was by governmental decree to citizens or simply by a father's household rule to restrain his

children, all laws coerce the will of men into a behavior mold. This is meant to limit free will.

There is also the more artful method known as *persuasion*. While some may think this to be purely a matter of free-will choice, it is not always so. A tyrant may wish to launch a propaganda campaign to persuade citizens to support his policy. Or perhaps some devious powers wish to hide their malicious policies by instituting a “two-party system,” such as we have in America. Then they might give those two systems different philosophies in order to attract the majority of the voters, thus denying any other viewpoints any significant power base. At that point, the voters may be deceived into thinking that they are exercising free will by voting for the candidate of their choice, when in practical reality it makes little difference who is elected. The real powerbrokers backstage have already financed and organized both candidates to make sure the public can only choose one of their own two candidates. The voters are made to feel as if they had chosen of their own free will, but it is all an illusion.

To go a step deeper, we are all products of our genes, culture, and education. We carry in our minds countless ideas that we have been persuaded to accept, most of which we learned as children when we were too immature to choose without coercion. Hindus grow up with Hindu values; Muslims with Muslim values; Christians with Christian values. Right or wrong, these permeate our minds as assumptions of truth, and they affect us subconsciously all our lives. It is very hard to rise above our cultural and religious background, where we may exercise free will without being influenced by coercion.

However, even if we could do so, our views are determined by more than just culture and education. Even the very time and place we were born will affect such things as whether or not we even hear of Jesus Christ. Millions have been born in remote countries for thousands of years. Yet it is common to hear churches teach that such people will be tormented in hell forever. They try to remove blame from God by placing it on men who did not go preach to them. This reduces the problem, but does not resolve it. Even if the first century Church had been 100% successful in fulfilling the Great Commission, there still would have been millions who had already died without Christ. Their only crime was that they were not born into an Israelite family who worshiped the God of the Bible.

To blame such a person for not knowing the true God is unjust. How can one say that such a person rejected God “of his own free will,” when he did not choose his own parents, nationality, or religious environment? As a consequence, many have been led to speak of free will as being an illusion. We cannot escape the fact that our wills have been directly coerced by parents, teachers, and governments since birth. The coercion began indirectly even before birth, when God predestined when we should be born, to what parents, in what nation, and to what religious, cultural and legal environment.

All of this coercion is accomplished either by authority or the illusion of authority. Authority itself, by its very nature, is coercive; the more authority one has, the more personal “free will” he appears to have, and the more he may limit the freedom of will for others by coercive laws and commands. Coercion is not evil in itself; it merely exists and can be used for either good or evil. In fact, because God delegated all authority over the earthly realm to man in Genesis 1:26, it must be “very good” (1:31). The point is

that we must recognize that there is really no such thing as absolute free will so long as man's authority is exercised on earth. Yet at the same time, we must also recognize that man's authority is very real, and that the more authority one has, the more "free" his will seems to be.

The King of Babylon was once of the opinion that his will stood above all others, and that he was in fact the sovereign of the earth. No man had authority over him; no man could coerce him; he made the laws and thus stood above them in authority. It appeared as if his will approached total freedom. Then God stepped in and demonstrated to him and to the world that even the earthly "king of kings" must recognize the sovereignty of God (Daniel 4). Paul put it this way in Romans 13:1:

¹ Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

We have also seen earlier that the climax of history will come only when Jesus has extended His rule to encompass the whole universe and has subdued all enemies. Only then will He give the Creation Kingdom back to His Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28) in its pristine state.

We shall deal with the question of liability and responsibility in the next chapter when we can treat it fully. Meanwhile, though, let us establish the fact that sovereignty, the ultimate *dunamis*, belongs to God in heaven, while authority, *exousia*, belongs to man here on earth. Both are operative; both are real; yet they are realities of a different plane of existence. These distinct realities are also described by two other Greek words denoting God's will (desire) and God's overall plan, or blueprint for history.

God's Will (*Thelema*) and God's Plan (*Boulema*)

The will of God is in a way subordinate to His plan, or the blueprint of history. The Greek words to describe each in the New Testament are *thelema* ("will") and *boulema* ("plan").

The word *thelema* is used about 60 times in the New Testament. It is usually translated "will." It denotes the will in the sense of the desire or wish. However, the word *boulema* refers to one's resolve. It goes beyond a mere desire. It denotes the actual plan, the intention, or the outworking of the will. It is only used twice in the New Testament, but in both cases we can note its distinction from *thelema*.

For example, in Acts 27:43 Paul was being taken prisoner to Rome. A storm had arisen, and the ship was grounded on a reef. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners in order to prevent them from escaping.

⁴³ But the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention [*boulema*], and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land.

Fortunately for Paul, the Centurion had more than a willing desire to save Paul. He also had the power to command and to carry out his plan (*boulema*). This indicated more than a mere desire to save Paul's life. He carried it out as part of his plan. The second passage where *boulema* is used is much clearer, for we already quoted it in

Romans 9:19, in regard to Pharaoh:

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will [*boulema*, 'plan, or intention']?"

You see, the will (desire) of God was expressed in Moses' statement: "Let My people go." Pharaoh was able to resist God's *thelema* will, or desire. The story of Pharaoh makes that obvious. But there was a *boulema* plan, or intention, that Pharaoh knew nothing about, and this he could not resist, for this was in the mind of God, not in the will of man. It was bound up in the sovereignty of God, not in the authority of man. And this plan is perfectly expressed in verse 17, where Paul quotes from Exodus 9:16 below:

¹⁶ But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.

It was God's will that Pharaoh let Israel go. But it was in God's plan that Pharaoh should resist God's will. Thus, God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to carry out that plan. This may seem like a terrible contradiction. Why would God create His own opposition and harden Pharaoh's heart, causing him to resist the will of God? It is no more contradictory than with the two covenants. The Abrahamic covenant gave men the inheritance by unconditional promise, while the Mosaic covenant made it conditional. This is not contradictory, but rather a paradox, as we saw in chapter eight.

As a consequence, man is judged only on the level of his obedience to the *thelema* of God, for this is the level of his authority. God takes full responsibility for that which He does according to His *boulema* plan. Yet because the *boulema* of God is a primal force which directly determines man's ability and desire to obey God's *thelema*, God holds himself ultimately responsible and liable for the actions and salvation of His creation. That is one reason why He came to pay the penalty for sin Himself, and we will deal with that topic later.

The Paradox of Soul and Spirit

The question of whether man's will is free or if "fate" determines events has been a matter of debate for thousands of years. Persia, Greece, and Judea all had different "denominations" which reflected both extremes as well as a middle-of-the-road view. In Judea the Sadducees, who denied the existence of the spiritual world (Acts 23:8), believed in total free will. The Essenes believed that all things were predestinated by God and denied any free will. The Pharisees stood in the middle, believing a little of each and all of none.

The Pharisees attempted this by watering down the two extremes. Predestination was understood as being mere *foreknowledge*, and free will was limited by God's ability to overrule at times. Yet all they did was to make the problem less glaring, but it was at the expense of both predestination and free will.

The main problem Christians face is that the Bible appears to teach all three views. Paul clearly uses the term "predestination" and fully defines it in Romans 9. However, he also makes it clear that man is responsible and liable for his own sins in an

eonian (“age-lasting”) judgment.

Paul had studied the rather sour philosophy of the Stoics who taught “fate;” he had learned the “friendly” philosophy of the Epicureans who taught total free will; and he had learned Pharisee doctrine, which taught foreknowledge. He knew all their arguments, which forced him to bring the biblical view into a much tighter focus. Such controversy hardly existed while the Old Testament was being written.

The Bible speaks of man choosing whether to serve God or not. The question is not whether man has a choice, but rather whether God has predetermined that choice. The question is not whether man has a will or not, but rather whether God has left it totally free or if He has coerced it by circumstances outside of his control. It is well known that if a man is a highly intelligent manipulator, he can quite easily predetermine the choices and decisions of those who are weak minded or less intelligent. God is the ultimate Intelligence, having ultimate power to bring creation to its intended end. God could easily have converted all men to Himself immediately, if He had chosen to do so. A few simple demonstrations of power would have done the job.

But God decided to make it more difficult, because the greater the challenge, the greater the glory in victory. He decided to win the world by His love, rather than by fear of His mighty power. This would take longer, of course, but in the course of history, men would love Him in return when they saw His love manifested in His people. Religions tend to convert men through fear. God converts men by love.

The authority God has given to men on earth is limited by God’s sovereignty. Sovereignty is self-derived power; authority is authorized by a higher power and is therefore limited and subjected by that power. Man does not have sovereignty. Therefore, his authority is limited, and his liability for his actions are limited according to his level of authority.

God disciplines men and judges them according to their level of authority. God holds Himself liable in the highest sense, because He alone is sovereign. As creator, He is ultimately responsible for His creation and its actions. It was therefore built into the plan of God from the beginning that Jesus Christ would come to die for the sins of the world. God held Himself liable for our sins and for the sins of the whole world.

In our daily lives we must act as if we have total free will. And yet, if we are to understand the mind of God, we are to see God in all things. The real question is that of *liability* for sin at the great judgment. Our liability is limited by the limited nature of our authority. Only unlimited authority can be judged with unlimited liability. This is the justice and mercy of God. What began in Eden shall end at the Great White Throne.

CHAPTER 12

Why Church Councils Condemned Restoration Teaching

The Achan Doctrine has troubled the Church at least as far back as the sixth century, when the a Church Council first began to condemn those who believed in the restoration of all things. The doctrine of eternal torment of the sinners was certainly held by a small minority of Christians for the first few centuries. Nonetheless, this teaching began fairly early, mostly in the Latin branch of the Church. One Christian leader who apparently believed this was the stern and bitter Latin father, Terullian. In 203 A.D. he wrote the following:

“How I shall admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many kings. . . groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness, so many magistrates who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer flames than they ever kindled against Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in raging fire.” (de Spectaculis, 30)

Thank God most people who have been taught the doctrine of eternal torment would never say such things! Most are simply victims of Church theologians, who themselves are victims of a long succession of eternal tormentists. Such writings can only come from one who is “*in the gall of bitterness*” (Acts 8:23). According to Strong’s Concordance, the word translated “gall” is actually the poppy plant. Wormwood is opium that comes from the poppy. Jesus refused to drink it even on the cross (Matt. 27:34), in order to teach us not to harbor bitterness in our hearts, no matter how trying our circumstances become. Bitterness drugs the mind and prevents us from putting on the mind of Christ. It prevents us from truly understanding the law of Jubilee, which is necessary to inherit the first resurrection.

The Roman government often persecuted the early Christians. Many were tortured, killed, and often fed to the lions for sport. Most of the early Church looked to Jesus’ example in His lamb-like attitude toward their persecutors. However, some of them turned bitter. Tertullian, quoted earlier, gloried in the thought that someday God would torture his adversaries and give them what they deserved. He did not have the mind of Christ. He did not know the power of forgiveness and love. In His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said in Matthew 5,

⁴³ You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.” ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you ⁴⁵ in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the

same? ⁴⁸ **Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

When Jesus speaks of “sons,” it is a Hebrew idiom. The Hebrew idiom in this case means that “sons” are those who imitate their fathers. Sons of Abraham are those who imitate his faith. The sons of the heavenly Father are those who do good to their enemies, even as God does by sending rain and sunshine upon both the righteous and the unrighteous. This is God’s character trait in His genes, which He desires to pass down to His children.

Yes, of course, this means that the just will always be at a disadvantage in the world. Do not the wolves always have a natural advantage over the sheep? Someone wrote a poem, a take-off on the words of Jesus (above):

The rain? It raineth every day
Upon the just and unjust fella;
But more upon the just, because
The unjust hath the just’s umbrella.

A little wry humor can often take the edge off our natural disadvantage. But the Achan Doctrine would scold God for His attitude toward His enemies. Those with the spirit of Achan would exult in the sinners’ utter destruction or eternal torture.

This carnal attitude was foreign to the great Christians of the past who believed in the restoration of all things. Men like Gregory of Nyassa, the man described as “the man enchanted with Christ” (*The Fathers of the Eastern Church*, p. 169). His treatise on 1 Cor. 15:28 is magnificent. (See Appendix 3.) One only needs to read the writings of the early Church to see a tremendous difference in attitude between the restorationists and the champions of eternal torment who troubled them.

Wolves in the Church

It would be naive to claim that all who were restorationists were godly, while all eternal tormentists were scoundrels. Yet in reading Church history it is surprisingly easy to pick out the wolves among the sheep just by the testimony of their lives. Jesus said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits (Matt. 7:16),” and it is true.

Both the sheep and the wolf leaders were, of course, highly intelligent, educated, and scholarly. But some were genuinely filled with the love of God toward others and manifested all the fruits of the Spirit in their character. A few of these were Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyassa, and Theodore of Mopsuestia. These all taught the restoration of all things.

On the other hand, there were also a few major Church leaders who were more akin to ravenous wolves, bitingly sarcastic and bitter, such as Tertullian (quoted above), whose poison pen dripped with bitter eloquence. Others were just as bad. The historians do not hesitate to list Jerome and Theophilus of Alexandria as other prime examples of such Church leaders.

Jerome tailored his doctrinal beliefs to conform to Rome’s version of orthodoxy. His desire for recognition was the only thing that was said to exceed his scholarship.

When confronted with the question of Arianism, instead of searching the Scriptures for truth, he simply wrote to the bishop of Rome, asking what position he should adopt. His attitude was much like a modern attorney today, whose job it is to defend a client regardless of his guilt or innocence. Jerome was one of the foremost scholars of his day, but he chose to use that scholarship like a lawyer paid to argue his client's case, not as an honest truth seeker.

Historians describe Theophilus of Alexandria as an “unprincipled man” having a “base mind” and not hesitating to make false accusations in order to further his political agenda. For many years Theophilus believed and taught that all men would be saved. This was, in fact, taught by all his predecessors in Alexandria from the beginning. But one day an issue came up where Theophilus wrote a treatise, agreeing with Origen that God was a Spirit and did not have a corporeal form. The “Scetic” monks of Egypt, who disagreed violently with this assertion, confronted him with it, and Theophilus out of fear suddenly proclaimed his agreement with the monks.

Later, a wealthy widow donated a large sum to Isidorus, the superintendent of the almshouse for the church in Alexandria—under the condition that Theophilus not be told about it. She was well aware of Theophilus' flagrant misuse of funds and wanted the money to be spent specifically on clothing for poor women, rather than lofty building projects. Theophilus heard of it, flew into a rage, and banished Isidorus by false accusations.

It happened that Isidorus was a great admirer of Origen. So to get even with Isidorus, Theophilus called together a synod of a few loyal bishops, condemned Origen as a heretic, and forbade anyone henceforth to read his works. When a group of 300 Nitrian monks refused to acquiesce in denouncing Origen, he then sent armed men to attack and kill them. Eighty of these monks, however, escaped, making their way to Constantinople, appealing to the bishop there, John Chrysostom, who, they knew, was a man of great integrity. John was horrified, and after hearing the case, he sided with the monks. However, Theophilus succeeded by outrageous accusations to depose John and send him into exile. He ultimately drove John to his death. These accusations were gleefully translated into Latin by Jerome, who, according to historian, Hans von Campenhausen, “lost all feeling of decency and veracity” (The Fathers of the Latin Church, p. 178.)

This controversy aroused suspicion against Origen in Rome also, particularly when a new Roman bishop was elected with the support of Jerome's friends. Origen was thus opposed by the new bishop and the West in general. And so Origen, a man of integrity, love, and kindness was slandered and cursed by the basest of men, wolves in sheep's clothing. And why? It was NOT for his teaching on the restoration of all things! *It was because he believed that God was a spirit* (John 4:24). Yet this later became the pretext by which the Church would denounce Origen and legitimize the doctrine of eternal torment for sinners.

The Achan Doctrine thus became the orthodox position of the Church. Even so, it would be another 150 years before there were enough bishops opposed to restoration teaching to condemn it by a formal Church Council.

Church Councils Condemn Origen

Origen was finally condemned in the Fifth General Council in 553 A.D., attended by only 148 bishops. Even so, nothing was specifically said about Origen's beliefs regarding the salvation of all men. It was left to the Emperor Justinian (527-565 AD) to condemn Origen's belief in the restoration of all things. He did so specifically in Anathema IX,

"If anyone says or thinks that the punishment of demons and of impious men is only temporary, and will one day have an end, and that a restoration will take place of demons and of impious men, let him be anathema."

The Church Council itself spelled out fifteen Anathemas against Origen, but none of them condemned his teaching that all men would be saved. In fact, they also said nothing about Origen's belief that even demons would ultimately be restored. This is particularly striking, since the Emperor himself had done so, and the Church Council would certainly have been pressured to follow his lead. Ironically, the same Church Council, in Session 1, claimed to follow "*in every way*" the writings of the two Gregorys, who taught that all men would be saved:

"We further declare that we hold fast to the decrees of the four Councils, and in every way follow the holy Fathers, Athanasius, Hilary, Basil, *Gregory the Theologian*, *Gregory of Nyassa*, Ambrose, Theophilus, John (Chrysostom) of Constantinople, Cyril, Augustine, Proclus, Leo, and their writings on the true faith."

In Donald Attwater's book, *Saints of the East*, page xvii, he writes about these early Church leaders and their beliefs:

"Origen and Gregory of Nyassa and *many others* among the Eastern Fathers believed that He came to save all spiritual creatures, not men only. He did not shed His blood on earth at Jerusalem for sin alone; He offered Himself as a gift on the high altar of Heaven *to save the angels and all the universe*, of which this little corner of earth is the smallest part."

In Robert Payne's book, *Fathers of the Eastern Church*, pp. 145 and 146, he affirms with more clarity the things Gregory and others taught:

"So always, Gregory [of Nyassa] celebrates the grandeur and nobility of men, with such charity that he could bring himself to believe that even the Prince of Darkness would once more be restored to his seat beside the throne of God. For Gregory, as for Origen, there is universal salvation."

It is clear, then, that the Fifth Church Council in 543 A.D. understood what they were condemning. However, they seem to have been rather selective in their condemnations, choosing to anathematize Origen and Theodore, but not Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyassa, or Gregory of Nazianzus. All of these early Church Councils (from 325 AD on) were primarily concerned with questions of the nature of God and of Christ, rather than the ultimate fate of the unbelieving sinners. If an average Christian today were to read the records of those Councils, it would often seem like endless hair-splitting of subjects that have no practical bearing on one's Christian life. Thus, while Origen and all of his writings were anathematized, the specific doctrines mentioned deal with lesser issues than the salvation of all men and all angels.

In Canon 1 of the Seventh Church Council in 692 AD, held in the city of Trullo,

the Council upheld the decision of the Fifth Church Council (above) against Origen. Of this we read in Aristenus' notes on the Council in the book, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. XIV, p. 361,

“The fifth [Council] was held in the time of Justinian the Great at Constantinople against the crazy Origen, Evagrius, and Didymus, who remodeled the Greek figments, and stupidly said that the same bodies they had joined with them would not rise again; and that Paradise was not subject to the appreciation of the sense, and that it was not from God, and that Adam was not formed in flesh, and that there would be an end of punishments, and a restitution of the devils to their pristine state, and other innumerable insane blasphemies.”

Their main concern seems to be over the inclusion of demons or devils in the restoration of all things. It is unfortunate that no one—including Origen and the others—made a distinction between man and satanic beings in the final restoration. One may believe in the restoration of all men without going so far as to believe in the restoration of “devils” as well. These are really separate issues, but no one in those days seemed to really know the difference between reconciliation, resurrection, salvation, and justification.

Distinctions in Terminology

Justification is a legal term relevant to sinners. Sinners need justification before the law.

Reconciliation is a term that applies to enemies. Enemies need to be reconciled to each other.

Salvation is a broad term often translated “deliverance,” and is generally needed by those who are in imminent danger. The word also carries the meaning of “health,” or “well-being,” and in this sense the danger is death from disease or condition of mortality.

Resurrection is something that the dead need.

While these terms are all generally related to each other, Paul uses the terms carefully—and so should we. One very good illustration of Paul's terminology is found in Romans 5:9 and 10, where we read,

⁹ Much more then, having now been *justified* by His blood, we shall be *saved from the wrath of God* through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were *reconciled* to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been *reconciled*, we shall be *saved* by His life.

Note that the blood of Jesus justifies us sinners, because His blood paid the price for our sin, thereby satisfying the demands of the law. As enemies, we are then reconciled to God through His death. Finally, we are “*saved from the wrath of God*” by His life. The wrath of God, i.e., judgment for sin, is ultimately the death penalty (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23). We are saved from that penalty of sin by Jesus' resurrection to life. All of these concepts operate harmoniously in our lives, but they have different functions.

What About Satan?

Romans 5:18 speaks of the *justification* of “all MEN,” yet says nothing of Satan being justified. The idea that Satan ever would be “justified” is foreign to the Scriptures.

1 John 2:2 says that the blood of Jesus is the propitiation (covering) for the sins of the whole world, but it is apparent that John was speaking of the habitable world of “all MEN,” not of Satan or demonic beings. Hence, Jesus’ blood is never applied to Satan.

1 Timothy 4:10 says God is the Savior of “all MEN,” again saying nothing about angels or spiritual beings. As we showed earlier, salvation deals with those in danger of death, or “the wrath of God.” Being justified by Jesus’ blood, we are then saved by His resurrection life. Because salvation is based upon justification by His blood, we cannot say that Satan ever will be “saved” either.

Neither do the Scriptures tell us that Satan will be “resurrected.”

It is only when we get into Colossians 1:16-20 that the apostle speaks of *reconciling* “ALL THINGS” that have been created, including things in earth and in heaven. We never find Paul telling us that the created universe will be “saved” or “justified.” It is always “reconciled.” Reconciliation always speaks of enemies, those who oppose each other as adversaries. The term “Satan” literally means Adversary, which is practically synonymous with “Enemy.” And so, when Paul wrote about *ta panta*, “THE ALL” being reconciled to God, whether they were beings in heaven or in earth, it seems self-evident that he spoke of both heavenly beings and earthly beings. Satan and men are portrayed in the Bible as being adversarial to God until such time as we are reconciled to Him. For men, this includes justification. For Satan, it does not. Therefore, the reconciliation of all things in heaven takes a different path from reconciling all men on earth.

It was commonly believed in the early Church that Satan and his hosts were fallen angels who had originally been subject to God. Today, others are exploring different possibilities. Some say that Satan is merely a personification of man’s fallen nature and the works of the flesh. Others say that Satan is indeed a separate spiritual entity, but that Satan was created to be God’s adversary from the beginning.

1 John 3:8 says he sinned from the beginning, and John 8:44 says he was a murderer from the beginning. We also know from Isaiah 45:7 that God creates evil. Isaiah 45 is the great chapter on the sovereignty of God, and this is part of the proof God gives, showing that evil is not out of God’s control. God does, of course, use evil for good purpose, for we know that to us all things work together for good. Hence, we are to give thanks to God in ALL things (1 Thess. 5:18), not just for the “good” things.

Jude 6 speaks of angels who left their first estate. This is speaking of the situation in Genesis 6:1-4 leading up to the flood, not the fall of angels prior to the creation of Adam. The NASV renders Jude 6 as follows:

⁶ And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

This refers to those who apparently intermarried with the daughters of men, producing giants in the earth, as we read in the account of Genesis 6.

Likewise, in Ezekiel 28 we have the most well-known passage that has been interpreted to mean that Satan was originally a good and powerful angel. Yet this passage is clearly speaking of “*the leader of Tyre*,” who is specifically said to be a MAN.

² Son of man, say to *the leader of Tyre*, Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your heart is lifted up, and you have said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the heart of the seas; yet *you are a man* [awdawm, “ADAM,” or “man”] and not God, although you make your heart like the heart of God—

From verse 12 and on, the prophet speaks about “*the king of Tyre*” in terms that seem to be referring to a situation in the garden of Eden. Verses 13-15 tell us,

¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. ¹⁴ You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. ¹⁵ You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.

Although it has been commonly believed for a long time that this passage is referring to Satan, it is actually a comparison between the king of Tyre and Adam himself in the garden of Eden. Adam was perfect in the day he was created. He walked with God on the holy mountain (kingdom) and among the “stones of fire.” In other words, Adam had full access to the presence of God and all its glory.

God had also given Adam dominion over all the earth—hence, he was the “anointed cherub who covers.” A cherub does not necessarily have to be an angelic being. Adam was a cherub in that pristine state prior to his fall. Though he was created with a physical body, that body was not subject to the limitations of the flesh prior to his fall. His body was much like Jesus’ post-resurrection body. I believe Adam originally had the ability to move freely between heaven and earth, or between the spiritual dimension and the earthly.

Another point to consider is whether or not angels have a free will. The only way Satan could be a fallen angel is if he were an independent agent with a free will, having the ability to rebel against God. If Satan really did rebel against God in this manner, then we have to ask ourselves why he would create angels with the ability to sin, and then not make provision for their salvation, as he did for man. Of course, if the angelic rebellion took place without God’s prior knowledge, then it brings into question the very power and sovereignty of God.

It seems to me that the fallen angel theory creates more serious problems than it solves. When we study the history of religious thought in ancient times, especially in the Greek-speaking world, it seems that the people spent much time trying to explain how a good God could create such a mess upon the earth. In trying to separate God from any and all responsibility for evil, it was necessary to give all evil or sinful beings a totally free will. While this seemed to justify God, it did so at the expense of His sovereignty.

The Greek philosophers believed that spirit was good and matter was evil. From this basic assumption, they decided that a good God could never create evil matter. So

they postulated that an evil god, called the Demiurge, created matter. He was like the Satan of other religions. While this view succeeded in sparing God from any responsibility for evil in the world, they also deposed God as Creator. And in all this, they still did not solve the underlying problem, *Who created the Demiurge?*

Scripture clearly tells us that God created all things. John 1:1 and 2 identifies the Creator (Logos) with Jesus Christ, not with Satan or a fictitious Demiurge. If God created Satan, and Satan is evil, then God created evil. Even if God created Satan good, but gave him the freedom to fall, the divine law still would hold God responsible. This we will show in our next chapter.

And so, regardless of the antiquity of this belief in fallen angels, I do not think it is warranted. It seems to me to be a belief that was more apt to be accepted in a Greek culture, and the early Church leaders were unable to break free of their cultural mindset in this matter.

It is beyond our scope here to delve further into these different views. However, let us say that if Satan is a fallen angel, as the majority have believed since the days of the early Church, then the weight of evidence shifts slightly in support of the view that Satan will at some time be restored to his original place. On the other hand, if Satan was created to be God's adversary from the beginning, then once his purpose has been fulfilled, there is reason to believe he will be eradicated when his purpose has been fulfilled and when all things are reconciled.

Clement of Alexandria in the second century A.D., who was Origen's teacher and head of the Church in Alexandria, wrote in his commentary on 1 John 2:2,

"He, indeed, saves all; but some He saves converting them by punishments; others, however, who follow voluntarily He saves with dignity of honour; so that '*every knee should bow to Him, of things in heaven, of things on earth, and things under the earth*'—
THAT IS, ANGELS AND MEN."

Clement followed the common belief that Satan and his hosts were "fallen angels." And so he argued that the only beings "in heaven" who needed reconciliation were the FALLEN angels, who were in an adversarial relationship with God. There is obviously no need to reconcile angels who never fell. But Clement goes beyond reconciliation by saying God "saves" them. I would dispute this terminology.

In his commentary, Clement quoted Paul's statement in Philippians 2:10 that "*every knee should bow.*" He took this to mean that all men and all the fallen angels would bow to God, at which time God would save them all. However, in view of the fact that Paul never says elsewhere that fallen angels are "saved" or "justified," Clement's conclusion is really only an assumption. Paul was quoting from Isaiah 45:23, where God says,

²³ "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*." ²⁴ They will say of Me, "Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength." Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him shall be put to shame. ²⁵ In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified, and will glory.

Notice that in the same passage all the seed of Israel is to be justified. It says nothing whereby we might justify Satan. When Paul quotes this passage in Philippians 2, he adds as his commentary, *“of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.”* I do not dispute Paul’s inspired writings, of course. I merely point out that Paul focused his attention on every knee bowing, saying that this goes beyond the justification of all Israel (or even of all men). Paul included all angels and men in his statement, and this is consistent with Revelation 5:13, where every creature in both heaven and in earth are shown to be giving glory to God.

On the other hand, we must also ask ourselves the critical question: Does this also refer to every living creature that ever lived? Will every dog, lion, and mosquito also be resurrected to bow the knee to God at the end of all time? Obviously not, for God resurrects only mankind. In fact, Psalm 22:29 seems to indicate precisely the opposite, saying, *“All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, even he who cannot keep his soul alive.”*

From the beginning, God said that Adam would surely die if he sinned. This was the judgment of God, and no one could escape his mortality, except through the prescribed Biblical path in Christ. Psalm 22:29 seems to indicate that death is God’s way of forcing all men to bow before Him. They bow the knee in death. Death proves that all men are subject to God, no matter what they do and no matter what they believe about themselves. Death is the final trump card that ends the game of life.

Paul takes this theme and appears to reinterpret it to mean that all things in both heaven and earth will bow their knee in glorifying God. It does not appear to be about death, but about life and restoration. And yet, the Scriptures clearly teach us that the path to life is through death. True believers know that we are to die daily to self-will and be subject to God. Such death is bowing the knee to God and glorifying His name. Believers undergo this “second death” in their lifetime, while the rest must undergo the “second death” in a future age. But either way, death is the only path to life. The fire of God operates in our lives today as we submit to the law and judgment of God in the process of sanctification and purification.

So is Paul really reinterpreting Isaiah 45:23, or is he merely telling us that the end of this death process is life? All will indeed bow the knee, but the reconciliation of all things will not take place apart from judgment, or the fire of God. Death is the process by which life is dispensed to all creation. God will not simply say, “Well, boys will be boys,” and then give life to all, regardless of the way they lived their lives on earth. He will give life only after all have bowed the knee and confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God.

If this is the case, then what about angels or satanic hosts who are spiritual beings? This is the real question at hand. If Satan is purely an adversary and was possibly created as such from the beginning, then it follows that there is no good in Satan. Hence, when he is cast into the lake of fire, there is no spiritual gold in him to be purified. In this way he is unlike mankind. Man is to be purified as gold and silver in the furnace of affliction, but the resulting salvation comes only because there was some gold or silver in the lump of metal to begin with. All else is burned up, leaving that which is good. In the case of Satan, one would be hard pressed to prove that there is any good in him that

would survive the fiery trial.

Here again, if Satan were a fallen angel, then one might have some basis for argument that there is something good in him that could be saved, for one would have to admit that Satan was originally good. So here is where we must discuss the meaning of *reconciliation* as it is used to describe “all things” in heaven and in earth.

The Limits of Reconciliation

There are many passages where Paul speaks of reconciling all things in both heaven and in earth. But where Paul appears to choose his words carefully, those after him in the early Church made no real distinction between reconciliation, salvation, and justification. It is apparent from Philippians 2 that all angels and men will indeed bow their knee to Jesus Christ, for this is something that *enemies* do when they have been fully defeated, subdued, or subjected to God. Every tongue must confess that He is Lord. But technically, this does not tell us precisely what Christ will do with them thereafter.

When Paul deals with the widest scope of the creation itself, he says it will be reconciled to God, implying that it is presently at enmity with God. That is, the creation is out of harmony with the nature and character of God. It is in a state of rebellion, or revolt. Not only would this include people, but land, sea, and air itself. Pollution and unhealthful living conditions are all out of step with the character of God. Ungodly men have claimed large portions of creation for their own purposes and have subjected it to unrighteous laws. But in the Tabernacles Age there will be an administrative change, and all things will begin to be subdued to the Kingdom of God and the law of Jesus Christ.

To *reconcile* creation, then, is to bring the creation itself into subjection to the laws of God. This includes inanimate objects, as well as animals, birds, and fish. This does NOT mean that animals, birds, fish, or rocks must be *justified* or even *saved*. God is going to *reconcile* them. Satan, demons, devils, etc. (no matter how one understands their nature) are also part of God's creation and will be *reconciled*, but nowhere are we told that Satan will be justified. Neither will Satan be saved.

Some years ago a man asked me the question: “Will bugs be saved?” His wife was horrified and embarrassed that he would ask such a silly question, but I treated it like a serious question. After all, if all things in heaven and earth will be reconciled to God, does this mean that every dog, elephant, and mosquito will be raised from the dead and saved? If one believes in the idea of transmigration of souls, commonly called “reincarnation,” then one might extend salvation to dogs, which are at present, according to that view, just unfortunate souls in a lower state of spiritual evolution.

However, I do not hold this belief, nor do I believe that all dogs will be saved, even though I do believe that dogs will be *reconciled* as a part of creation. That is, when creation is reconciled to God, there will no longer be adversity between any of God's creatures. Isaiah 11:6-9 tells us,

⁶ And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. ⁷ Also the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the

weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. ⁹ They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah paints for us a picture of the reconciliation of all creation. No doubt it is symbolic of people, but I believe it also has reference to actual animals living on earth in the ages to come, prior to the final Creation Jubilee. It appears that in the reconciliation God will change the diet of the predatory animals, so that lions “*will eat straw like the ox.*” But this does not necessarily mean that all the lions of past millennia will be raised from the dead and receive salvation. The same would hold true with mosquitoes and flies, hopefully, or else the earth might be literally overrun with these pests.

If God is not bound to raise these dead pests from the dead in the reconciliation of all things, then I suggest that God will simply keep a certain number of animals, birds, and fish on the earth in the ages to come for the purpose of beautification and companionship. It is doubtful if He will retain every pest and noxious weed that currently grows, for these seem to be the result of Adam’s sin and the curse upon the ground which came from it (Gen. 3:17). Likewise, pests and harmful bacteria currently are a major part of the diet of birds and fish. If their diets are changed like that of the ox and lion, then perhaps such harmful creatures may be eliminated altogether. To reverse the curse, then, would appear to mean the elimination of these harmful creatures, which came upon the earth *after the fall of man*. Hence, the reconciliation of creation would be to restore harmony to creation and reverse the effects of Adam’s fall.

God is under no obligation to raise past animals from the dead, harmful or otherwise. There is no indication that dogs and cats, once dead, ever would be raised from the dead, although it may perhaps be conceivable that God would raise certain ones from the dead for the sake of happiness of their previous owners. We are really not told in the Bible, but God is a Creator and life-giver by nature. He delights to make His children happy. There is no reason to think that God would not or could not “resurrect” some animals from the dead, if He so chose to do so to beautify the earth and to make His children happy. But this still could not be regarded as justification or salvation as defined in the Bible. Even so, this is mere speculation and, perhaps, a bit of wishful thinking. The bottom line is that we do not know for sure what God will do, but we know that life will be happy and harmonious.

Will there be animals in the Kingdom of God during the time of the restoration of all things? Most certainly, for God created all things “very good” from the beginning, and there is no reason to think that God has changed His mind. But will those animals be immortal? It might be the case that the very docile lion whose diet is changed to straw might not be immortal, even though he is reconciled to God. However, it would seem to me that, ultimately, death would be abolished totally from the universe, in the sense that there will be no more death.

For man, this means all will be raised from the dead, never to die again. For the animals, it would appear that those chosen to live on the earth in the ages to come will remain alive and not die. Most likely they all will be vegetarian, and their digestive system will change considerably, no longer needing insects as part of the food chain. It is difficult to conceive the massive changes that would have to take place just in this regard,

because of the delicate “balance of nature” that currently exists, but we know that this would not present much of a problem with a sovereign God.

In regard to plant life, it is also apparent that ferns and oak trees will not be resurrected, justified, or saved. The earth would be a barren place without plant life, so it is safe to assume that plant life will exist in the restoration of all things. It would appear that animals would eat plant life. So when death is abolished, this does not include plant life. Plants die when animals eat them. The restoration of all things will no doubt mean that plant life will be more lush, nutritious, and absolutely disease-free.

The concept of the restoration of all things means that the earth is not going to be destroyed, as so many today have been told. It was created for a purpose, and that purpose will be fulfilled. It was meant to house the Kingdom of God and be a kind of headquarters or beginning point for the Kingdom of God in the universe. The fire that is to come upon the earth will be the Holy Spirit's baptism that will cleanse the earth and bring all into harmony with the purposes of God. God will not fail in His purpose for creation. His word has gone forth, and it will not return to Him void.

How is Satan Reconciled?

Once we come to terms with the meaning of reconciliation, and see that it does not necessarily include resurrection, justification, or salvation, then we must ask ourselves if the early Church leaders went too far in their belief of universal *salvation*. Paul says of God in 1 Timothy 2:4 that “*He desires [thelo, “wills”] all MEN to be saved,*” but he says nothing of dogs. Later in the same book, Paul tells Timothy in 4:10 that God “*is the Savior of all MEN, especially of believers.*” John 2:2 says that He “*is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole WORLD.*” It is clear from these and many other statements that salvation is applicable to mankind and to the world of people. The term is never applied to animals, rocks and trees, or to Satan and fallen angels.

These are the Biblical tools by which you, the reader, may draw your own conclusion as to the fate of those other than mankind. Technically, the Bible is silent on this, but we suggest that if we define *reconciliation* beyond certain limits allowable by Scriptural context, we would be compelled to include dogs and mosquitoes in the plan of salvation, along with Satan and his hosts.

As for Satan or demons and devils, we do not believe that the kingdom of darkness and sin will forever co-exist with God and His Kingdom. In the end there will be nothing left that is not put in subjection to Christ. Either God will reconcile creation by ending their existence altogether, or He will reconcile them as a part of creation in whatever way He may see fit. History will not end with the universe divided between good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan, heaven and hell. This was the view of Persian Dualism, adopted by the Manichean sect in the third and fourth century A.D.

Unfortunately, the great Augustine had been a member of the Manichean sect for eight years prior to his conversion in 386 A.D. While he did renounce most of its beliefs, he never freed himself from the root belief that good and evil would co-exist in eternity, and that God would not truly reconcile all of creation to Himself. Thus, he saw history ending with all mankind separated into heaven or hell. Essentially, he rejected the truth

stated plainly in Hebrews 2:8 and 9,

⁸Thou hast put all things in subjection under His [Christ's] feet. For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to Him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to Him.

While one may argue the point one way or the other from a doctrinal position, we here in this book are concerned with the more practical and relevant question of whether *all men* or only a relatively small fraction of *mankind* shall be saved. We do not believe that evil must exist forever, for that is a doctrine of Persian Dualism, rather than of Christianity. At the end of time, one way or the other, the light of God's Kingdom will fill the entire universe, leaving no room for anything or anyone outside of God's dominion.

CHAPTER 13

The Tension in Creation

We begin by quoting the Apostle Paul in his comment about the problem of creation in Romans 8:19-22,

¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope [expectation] ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

Paul makes it clear that the creation had no choice in being subjected to “*futility*” and to “*slavery to corruption*.” It was done by the sovereign will of God alone. Futility, vanity, or emptiness describe a path that appears to go nowhere and has no purpose. When Adam sinned, his sin was imputed to all mankind. We all became liable for Adam’s sin, and thus we are all mortal, paying for a sin which we did not commit. And not only mankind, but ALL OF CREATION was subjected to this “corruption.”

It is contrary to the divine law for anyone to impute a father’s sin upon the children. Deuteronomy 24:16 says:

¹⁶ Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* sons, nor shall sons be put to death for *their* fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.

This Law is repeated in Ezekiel 18:20, which says:

²⁰ The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

Children were not to be punished for the sins of their father. And yet this is precisely what God did with us. The fact that all of Adam’s children are born mortal proves that we are paying for a sin committed by our father (Romans 5:12). Adam’s children were put to death for the sin of their father Adam. Did God not know that this was unjust? Of course He did! After all, He had prohibited such injustice by His own law, revealed to Moses and confirmed by Ezekiel.

This raises the most basic question about the justice of God. Death was imposed upon us outside our will, and this is the root cause of all personal sins committed after Adam’s original sin. We are being held liable for a sin of our father, Adam. We cannot hide this issue and hope it goes unnoticed by God’s critics. Nor can we theologize it away after God clearly takes the credit for holding us liable.

In dealing with this problem, we must first know that He is just, and have faith that He knows what He is doing. We must align ourselves with His plan, rather than attempt to alter His plan to fit what we think He should have done.

In looking at the way God imputed Adam's sin to his descendants, and the divine law which prohibits such behavior, we do not hesitate to call God's action a "temporary injustice," which is the direct cause of the *Tension* in the history of creation. Tension is the result of injustice or disharmony *while it is yet unresolved*. It has many applications. When a nation wrongs another, tension is set up, often leading to war. When an individual wrongs another, tension is in the air until restitution is made. Tension always demands a resolution.

In music there are certain chords which contain conflicting or discordant notes. These chords set up an emotional tension until the chord is resolved. This is a very common musical technique, used to play upon the emotions of the listener and draw him into the music by forcing him psychologically to demand harmony. Discord torments the mind of the musician, in order to maximize the feeling of relief when the harmonious chord is struck and the tension resolved.

It is much like the cliffhangers in books or television programs. All are temporary tensions designed to make the listeners *demand* a resolution.

God, too, has employed this technique in the music of the spheres and in the book of history. Imputing death and corruption to mankind and to creation in general has produced a judicial tension that demands resolution. Paul says that God certainly will not leave creation hanging. The disharmony and injustice is only temporary. In fact, Paul says that the injustice that caused the tension will be MORE THAN COMPENSATED when the final chord of history is struck. And so Paul reminds us in Romans 8:18,

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

And again, he says in 2 Corinthians 4:17,

¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

Paul is reminding us that the injustices of life are not only temporary, but will be more than righted at the last day when He restores all things.

Justice and Liability for Evil

The justice of God has been a matter of philosophical debate for thousands of years. In fact, all religions must deal with this question sooner or later. What is the origin of evil? What is its purpose? How will it end? Is there really justice with God? Some even question the existence of God on the grounds that "if there were really a God, why would He allow all these wars and other terrible things to happen?"

Each religion's solution to these age-old problems gives character to its own particular god. We have already raised questions about the justice of God of the Bible in view of the things He does by His own sovereign will, or plan. Recall that Paul, too, questioned God's righteousness in dealing with Pharaoh (Rom. 9:14). Every time we talk

about Esau, Pharaoh, or others who seem to have been treated unjustly, we raise the level of tension that must be resolved. And that is the purpose of this final section of our study.

The real underlying question that we must deal with is the *liability* for sin. How liable is man for his sin? How liable is God for His actions in subjecting the creation to the bondage of corruption? God always assumes full responsibility for all of His actions, and, of course, man must follow His example. Man always resists God's will (*thelema*), but Paul says that no man can resist God's plan (*boulema*). Yet before we can understand this question in any depth, we must define our terms.

The Definition of Sin

Man sins because he is mortal. He is mortal because God made him liable for the original sin of his father Adam. Therefore, God is the *direct* cause of man's weak (mortal) condition and the *indirect* cause of his personal sins. The question is: Does this make God a sinner? We immediately answer, NO. Is God liable in any way for man's sin? We immediately answer, YES. This is one reason why He made Himself liable for our sin through Jesus Christ, and then paid the penalty for sin.

We do NOT agree that this makes God a sinner, but only that He has made Himself ultimately liable by His own law. To prove this, we must first look at the meaning of the word that is translated "sin" in the Scriptures.

The Hebrew word for "sin" is *khawtaw*. It is translated "sin" in over 400 Bible passages. Yet the word literally means "to miss the mark," or "to fail to reach a goal." In the physical sense, the word can be used in the case of an archer whose arrow misses the target. Judges 20:16 gives us another example:

¹⁶ Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss (*khawtaw*, "to sin, or miss").

In the moral sense, the target, goal, or standard is the divine Law (1 John 3:4). Any transgression of the Law is "sin," because the Law is God's standard of righteousness. A sinner is one who has fallen short of perfection as defined in the Law. Paul alludes to this meaning when he writes in Romans 3:23, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" The glory of God here is the target. We have all fallen short of the target, failing to attain to that perfect goal.

Essentially, then, sin is a failure to reach a particular goal. God created His own goal: to create the universe, to allow man to fall into death and sin, and then to reconcile creation with justice and grace. To teach us justice, it was necessary for man to fall into sin. To implement grace, God needed sinners as the objects of grace.

And so we ask ourselves: *Will God fail to carry out His plan?* Must He reach for "Plan B?" If so, then God is a failure, hence a sinner. But God is not a sinner, nor is He a failure. Nothing took Him by surprise, for He foreknew all things. Nothing was out of control, even for a split second, for God is all-powerful. From the beginning it was in God's plan to create a temporary injustice and to spread it out on a finite time line which we call history.

Many people unknowingly accuse God of being a sinner, because they have not been taught the simple biblical definition of sin. As children we learned the chorus,

“Jesus Never Fails,” and often this motto is portrayed upon the walls of Christian homes. But when we grow older, we often are taught that Satan and men have the ability to thwart God’s plan and purpose for creation. God wrings His hands in despair, like a helpless giant in the sky, loudly complaining about man’s condition, but fully bound by the law of free will to do anything about it. Plan after plan fails, and so God is thought to be changing plans constantly in an attempt to salvage as much as He can out of this world mess, before He is forced to destroy nearly everything. Satan is said to win perhaps 90-99 percent of the world, but somehow God is given the victor’s wreath.

While God is so often portrayed as an all-powerful, but helpless giant, the devil is portrayed as being NEARLY as powerful as God Himself. But his advantage is that he cares nothing about man’s free will. He is said to have a free hand in manipulating and causing men to sin in ways that God could never do to establish righteousness. In the way many Christians have been taught to view these age-old questions, Satan seems to fail far less than God does. And finally, when it is all over, Satan wins with 99% of mankind, while God is left with a paltry 1-10% of creation with which to populate the kingdom of light. This was essentially the position of Augustine in his City of God, where history ends with a final separation of light and darkness, with Satan being a success (and punished for it!), while God is viewed as the sore loser—thus, the sinner, the helpless Giant who failed.

This view of both God and Satan has serious flaws that need to be rectified by some serious Bible study.

The Definition of Evil

Neither “sin” nor “evil” are necessarily moral terms. Both are used in a moral sense many times, but they are not always to be applied morally. In the case of “sin,” we have already seen how it may refer to Benjamites missing a target with stones. In the case of “evil,” it is the same.

Probably the simplest definition of evil is this: evil is anything bad or adverse that happens from MY earthly point of view. It includes all calamities that may occur, such as earthquakes, whirlwinds, famines, and pestilence. It also includes all judgment for moral sins. We are told in the Bible that God brings evils upon an individual, a city, a nation, or even the whole world in accordance to the Law. Often these “evils” take the form of wars, earthquakes, or famines. We normally think of these things as God’s righteous judgments against the ungodly.

When these things happen to Christians who do not believe they have done anything wrong, they have a habit of blaming the devil for attacking the righteous. Other Christians, though, who suffer from inner guilt and fear, often assume that God is angry with them when such troubles occur. These are rather simplistic views that are more often incorrect than correct. While it is true that all evil is judgment for sin, we must understand that most evil that befalls men is either a result of Adam’s sin in general or the result of the corporate sin of the nation. Individuals are, of course, affected by such judgments, because they are held liable for the sins of those in authority over them.

When a “natural” disaster occurs, many people are left asking why this happened. We often hear comments like, “*Why is God so angry with us?*” The victims of such “evil”

befalling a city or nation should realize that God's judgments are not usually directed at them for their sin, but for the corporate sin of the nation or its leadership. The people pay the price for the sins of their leadership. Only those who hear and obey God's voice are divinely protected—but even then, such people are often subjected to the liability of the nation when called as intercessors. (See our book, Principles of Intercession.)

Evil itself is not sin, for Amos 3:6 says, "*shall there be evil in a city; and the LORD hath not done it?*" Evil is not sin, for God does evil, but does not sin. Likewise, as parents, we may bring "evil" upon our children (from their point of view) when we discipline them. Children seldom agree with their parents in matters of discipline. Evil becomes sin only when it is done apart from the perfect will of God.

Finally, the governments of man have often proclaimed or acted upon the assumption that the end justifies the means, that they may do evil toward an individual for the greater good of the community. In this they have made themselves gods. Invariably, the greater good that they claim to establish never comes, and the people are mistreated and destroyed. Only God Himself has the capability of bringing good out of evil (Rom. 8:28). When men attempt to do this, they merely destroy people, and no good comes out of it. In fact, generally speaking, all the evil which they claim to be doing for the public good is really to consolidate their own power or to increase their own wealth.

The Origin of Evil

The Bible says that all things were created by God through Jesus Christ. John 1:3 reads,

³ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Paul also testifies to this in 1 Corinthians 8:6.

⁶ Yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.

There are some widely divergent views on Satan, and it is not our purpose here to take up this matter. It is enough to say that Satan, whatever or whoever this is, was CREATED BY GOD. No other point is relevant to our present discussion. Nearly every Christian view agrees with this, so we will not pursue this further.

The real question—a question that has provoked much heated discussion for millennia—is the origin of evil.

The foremost problem that philosophers and theologians in the past have had to resolve is how a perfect and just God could either cause or permit evil in the creation. Nearly all of them have made the assumption that God could neither create nor cause evil without tainting His character. Consequently, they have all attempted to shift the responsibility to others, either to Satan or to men.

The Persians were probably the most successful in removing from God all responsibility for evil. They taught that Satan was co-equal and co-eternal with God. Thus, all evil in the world originated and was propagated totally outside the jurisdiction

of God, and outside his power to prevent it. This removed all liability from God's account. However, this was only done at the expense of His sovereignty, for now there were TWO GODS of equal strength and duration in the universe. The Bible clearly begs to differ with this view.

The pagan Greeks, who believed that spirit was good and matter was evil, did not believe that a good God could create matter without tainting His good character. So, as we explained in an earlier chapter, they believed that the creator of all things was an evil Demiurge, a lesser, evil god. However, they were never able to figure out how the good God could create an evil Demiurge in the first place.

This "solution" reduced the problem, but it did not eradicate it. It removed God from all *direct* liability for the sin in the world; yet God was still *indirectly* responsible by creating the Demiurge or allowing him to be created and allowing him to do his evil work.

The Church, like the Greeks, has often put the blame for the origin of evil entirely upon Satan. The purpose of this argument is to remove from God any liability for sin. The thought is admirable, but unfortunately it does this at the expense of His sovereignty. It forces us to think of Satan as an independent god—an angel originally created good but who fell out of his own free will. That view gives men the impression that God has no control over Satan, or if He does, then God is helpless to do anything about it, except to attempt to influence men to do good and reject evil.

Furthermore, in putting all the blame on Satan, this view succeeds in separating God from *directly* causing evil, but it has never succeeded in separating God from *indirectly* causing evil by creating Satan in the first place. The only way to make God totally free of liability would be to insist that Satan took God totally by surprise when he fell. This, however, makes God less than omniscient (knowing all things).

The justice and goodness of God is correctly assumed in most Christian circles. How we resolve the philosophical problem is the subject of much debate and depends upon other assumptions. The Calvinist viewpoint attempts to resolve the issue by preserving the sovereignty of God, but it does so at the expense of His justice. In other words, they say that God has sovereignly elected a small remnant for salvation, and the rest have been elected to burn in hell. The Arminian viewpoint attempts to resolve the issue by preserving God's justice at the expense of His sovereignty. In other words, they say that man has total free will and that God can do little or nothing to overrule either Satan or man.

The problem is like a short blanket. The longer one end is, the shorter the other end. In vain we pull the blanket up to cover our chins, for as we do, we leave our toes exposed. It is one of the most unresolvable problems of the universe. Philosophers of all religious persuasions have struggled with it for a long time as well.

God is the Creator of Both Good and Evil

The Bible makes no apology for the fact that God is the Creator of all and the cause of evil. While Christians may shrink from this and consider it "blasphemous," the Bible boldly makes such statements with no thought of such an assertion tainting His character. Isaiah 45:7 plainly says:

⁷ The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity [*ra*, “evil”]; I am the LORD who does all these.

As we saw earlier, God unashamedly takes full credit for the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, proving His sovereignty, but totally ignoring the problem of justice. The Old Testament simply assumes that men are aware that He is sovereign, and that He has His agenda in history, His plan, which shall be fulfilled. It is as natural for God to create evil as it is for Him to create darkness. God raises up His own opposition in the persons of Pharaoh and Esau, with no judicial apology.

It is, perhaps, for this reason that the Apostle Paul, when confronted by charges that God may be unjust in doing this, merely says, “Who are you to question God? Do you not know that He is the Potter, and we are only the clay?” (Romans 9:20 and 21) He was only paraphrasing Isaiah 45:9-11, which says:

⁹ Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker—an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, “What are you doing?” Or the thing you are making say, “He has no hands?” ¹⁰ Woe to him who says to a father, “What are you begetting?” Or to a woman, “To what are you giving birth?” ¹¹ Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: “Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, and you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.

In other words, if you want to argue, or “strive,” go argue with someone on your own level, another broken piece of pottery. How dare the clay question the Potter? How dare we question God’s competency or tell God how to run the universe? We must first recognize our place. We must agree that God is sovereign and that He knows what he is doing. With that faith, we may approach Him, asking for greater understanding in order that we might conform to His Image.

Verse 11 is translated a little differently in the Concordant Version, which seems to clarify the thought better:

¹¹ Yet concerning My sons, and concerning My daughters, and concerning the contrivance of My hands *are you instructing Me!*

In other words, considering the fact that we are only clay vessels, and that God is the Potter of the clay, how dare we instruct God! Do we really think we are so wise and powerful? Do we dare to tell God that He “has no hands?” Do we think of Him as handicapped and in need of our help and advice? Who do we think we are?

Paul was very much impressed by Isaiah 45, for he uses it as the basis for at least four main doctrines in the book of Romans:

- (1) That God is sovereign (Is. 45:9-14);
- (2) That God creates both light and darkness, good and evil (Is. 45:7);
- (3) That God will save “all Israel,” not just the nation but “all the seed of Israel” (Is. 45:17, 25);
- (4) That He will save all the ends of the earth, and that every knee will bow to

Him (Is. 45:22, 23).

Without a thorough knowledge of this chapter in Isaiah, one cannot understand Romans 5 and Romans 9-11.

Like Paul, Job also understood that God was ultimately the Author of both good and evil. It was revealed to him that Satan needed God's permission to tempt men (Job 1:6-12). So he said in 2:10:

¹⁰ But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" *In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*

The word translated "adversity" is *ra*, the word normally translated "evil." Many evil things had happened to Job. The biblical account tells us that Satan had to get permission from God to afflict Job (1:6-12). God gave Satan permission, and that is when the disasters, or "evils" began to happen to him. First, Job's servants were killed by Sabeans, then Chaldeans killed more servants and stole his camels, and then a tornado destroyed the house, killing all his children. Finally, Satan got permission from God to afflict Job with boils (2:7).

In the story all these things were obviously brought about by Satan, and yet nothing happened without God's express permission. God could have prevented this, but chose not to do so. God did not sin in this, but Job knew that God was responsible for all this evil that had befallen him. Job attributed evil to God—NOT to Satan—and did NOT sin in doing so. Satan was merely God's agent of judgment or testing, not an independent god outside of God's control. It is much like the way God uses human agencies to judge or test people. For example, God used Assyria to judge Israel, and He used Babylon to judge Judah and Jerusalem.

Many other passages in the Bible attribute evil to God. Most of them are where God attributes evil to Himself. Such verses take on a whole new meaning when we contrast it to Persian Dualism, which made an extreme attempt to separate all evil from God and make God and Satan equal in power. The Bible was certainly NOT influenced by such man-made ideas that elevate Satan's power to that of God Himself. There are no other gods beside Him. No one even comes close.

The Laws of Creation and Liability

The book of Genesis knows only the overriding law of creation, which says that *the Creator is always greater than the creature*. This is so, because a creator owns and is responsible for that which he creates. By this law, farmers own what they produce, and carpenters own what they build. It is the basis of all laws of private ownership.

Ownership is really little more than authority, because to own something means that a person has the authoritative right to use it as he sees fit. But with all authority comes an equal level of responsibility, or liability. And so, by this law, we find that men are liable for the actions of the animals they own (Exodus 22:5). If a fire destroys someone's property, the one liable is he who started the fire, for he is the creator and owner of that fire (Exodus 22:6). These liability laws are only derived from the original and more fundamental law of creation when used to determine liability.

It is self-evident that man was created with a potential to sin. God could have created man in a perfect state, incapable of sinning. Christians are also generally agreed that God did this deliberately, that it was not a “mistake” or an oversight on His part. In fact, it was necessary that man have a potential to sin.

We also learn from Genesis that God placed Adam and Eve in Eden, which contained both a tree of life and a tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9). Furthermore, He placed in that garden a tempter; or perhaps some might prefer to say He ALLOWED a tempter to invade the garden. At any rate, no one should dispute the fact that the tempter entered with God’s knowledge, and the fact that God could have prevented this if He had chosen to do so.

So God created man with the potential to sin, provided man with the opportunity to sin, and then allowed the tempter to provoke the sin. The book of Genesis tells this story without any thought of objection or argument. Yet if we study the divine law as given to Moses, we find some serious moral objections that must be overcome.

Most Christians construct their philosophy of the origins of good and evil on the argument that God did not FORCE Adam to sin but only ALLOWED it, and that such permission on God’s part is necessary to preserve God’s integrity and man’s free will. This reasoning has some merit, of course, on the human level, as we have already explained. We appreciate the fact that people want to preserve God’s integrity. However, the argument that God merely allowed the sin to occur does not really resolve the problem. It only REDUCES the problem. James 4:17 gives us a general principle of divine law that applies to this situation:

¹⁷ Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

The fact is, WE ARE our brother’s keeper (Gen. 4:9). If it is within our power to prevent our brother from being injured or from suffering loss in any way, and we do not help, we are liable for the loss. When applied to man, whose goal is obedience to God’s will (*thelema*), failure to keep this law is sin. When applied to God, however, it is a little different, because He operates on *boulema*, the divine plan, the overall intention, the blueprint for history. And so we must keep in mind that although God deliberately incurs liability, it is within His plan to do this. Therefore, it is not sin to Him, so long as He does not fail in His overall purpose. This law on the prevention of evil is further expanded in the liability laws of Exodus 21.

1. The Ox in the Pit

Exodus 21:33 and 34 tells us:

³³ And if a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴ the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead *animal* shall become his.

The owner of the pit is liable even if he did not physically force the ox into the pit. The fact remains that he ALLOWED it to happen by digging the pit and not covering it. He is liable on the grounds that he could have prevented it but did not. He created the

OPPORTUNITY for the ox to fall into the pit. And so, the divine law rules that the man who opened the pit is legally *liable* and must pay restitution to the animal's owner.

In applying the spirit of this law to Adam's situation in the garden, God is both the owner of the pit and the owner of the ox (Adam). First, God dug a pit, because he created an opportunity for Adam to sin. God did not cover this pit in that He created Adam with the potential to sin and created a tree of knowledge, putting it within Adam's reach. God created an opportunity for Adam (the ox) to fall into the pit (sin and death). That made God legally liable by His own law and created a "tension" that demanded a resolution.

The lawful solution is that restitution must be made. The final result is that "*the dead animal shall become his*." So God bought the dead ox (Adam and all who died in Adam), and the ox became His. Is not this why Jesus came? He fulfilled the law to the letter, purchasing all who died in Adam.

This law was not only made to regulate men's liability; God enacted it deliberately to make Himself liable, so He could fulfill the law and resolve the tension in creation at the final Jubilee.

2. Consuming the Field

This principle of liability is found again in Exodus 22:5, to which we shall add some phrases that appear in the Septuagint version, but not in the King James Version or in the New American Standard.

⁵ "If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed *bare* and lets his animal loose [deliberately] so that it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution [out of his own field according to the yield thereof; and if the whole field be eaten, of the best of his own field, and] from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

The owner of the ox is liable. He cannot excuse himself by saying, "I didn't FORCE the ox to eat the neighbor's grass; the ox did it all by himself." No, the owner is liable simply because he is the owner.

So how is the liable party to pay restitution? The law says, "an eye for an eye," which in this case is "field for field." Jesus said, "*the field is the world*" (Matt. 13:38). God ALLOWED one of his "beasts" or creatures (the serpent) to feed in another man's field. Furthermore, the "whole field" was eaten, for all men have been consumed by sin.

What kind of "grass" did this beast consume? It was Adam and Eve and ultimately all of mankind, for "*all flesh is as grass*" (1 Peter 1:24). Here was another temporary injustice, a tension that needed to be resolved to harmonize the spheres. God honored and upheld His own law of liability, and "*the best of his own field*" (Jesus) was given to man as restitution.

3. The Railing on the Roof

In ancient times, houses had stairs leading up to the flat roof, where people could enjoy the breeze in the cool of the day. And so a railing was required as a safety precaution. Deuteronomy 22:8 gives us the law:

⁸ When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet [railing] for your roof, that you may not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it.

If you were to deliberately PUSH someone off the roof, and he died as a result, you would be liable for first degree murder, and the penalty would be death. But if you just neglected to build a railing and someone fell off and were killed, you would be liable only for involuntary manslaughter. The sentence is reduced, but you would still be liable and must flee to the city of refuge until the death of the high priest (Deut. 19:1-4).

When God allowed Adam to fall, and when God allowed the tempter to tempt Adam, He left the railing off the roof. He did not take the safety precaution required by His own law that would have prevented Adam and Eve from falling. And so, when God walked in the garden “*in the cool of the day*” (Gen. 3:8), He found that Adam and Eve had fallen off the roof. God became liable, and the result was tension. This liability would have to last until the death of the High Priest. Jesus had to come as the true High Priest of the temple in heaven and die, in order to release God from the liability incurred and strike the chord that would again bring harmony to the sphere of the universe.

Such liability laws are absolutely righteous in the eyes of God. We would do well to take heed to them ourselves. The world is already full of people who would stand by and watch someone being murdered on the streets of the city. These bystanders do not actually commit the crime themselves, so they think they are absolved of any liability. But God’s law holds them liable if they do nothing to prevent the crime from being carried out. They are their brother’s keeper.

Some think the law has been nullified. But never was the law upheld so firmly as when Jesus came to die in order to pay the full penalty that the law demanded. When Adam fell into the pit that He left open, Jesus paid the price and bought the dead animal. When the whole field was consumed, God gave the best of His own field. When Adam fell off the roof of the house that God had built without a railing, Jesus, the High Priest, died to release God from the law’s debt. How, then, can anyone think that he is free of liability that even God *bound Himself* to pay?

We cannot absolve God of liability by saying, “Well, He did not FORCE Adam to fall. Adam did that all on his own by his own free will.” Even if that were true, and God’s liability would only be reduced. It does NOT absolve Him of all liability. Not according to His own law.

Some may blame the devil (serpent), and indeed, God does hold him partially liable (Gen. 3:4). But once again, the serpent is like any other “beast” that is created and therefore owned by God by the law of Creation. Like the ox that ate the neighbor’s field, so also did the serpent consume God’s “fruit” (in this case, Adam and Eve). One may blame the devil for doing the actual deed, but one can never legally absolve God of all liability. To incur legal liability, God only had to ALLOW the situation to occur when He could have prevented it. Yet this is not to say that God sinned in doing this. To sin is to fail to achieve a goal. God is not a failure. All of this was built into the plan. God created the tension, and God will resolve it—and already has resolved it by the Cross.

4. The Ox that Gored

There is another of God's laws that apply here. Exodus 21:28-31 says,

²⁸ And if an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished. ²⁹ If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring, and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. ³⁰ If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him. ³¹ Whether it gores a son or a daughter, it shall be done to him according to the same rule.

The serpent, or Satan, caused death to come upon Adam and all mankind. The spirit of the law says that the offending beast must then be confined in order to prevent this from ever happening again. If not, the owner must pay with his life. *Did God confine Satan?* No. Satan will not be confined until the Tabernacles Age (Rev. 20:1-3). There are some who believe that Satan was confined when Jesus died on the Cross. Either way, God did not confine Satan for thousands of years, during which time he continued to tempt mankind and bring them to ruin.

After bringing Adam and Eve into mortality, God sentenced the serpent to eating dust and crawling on his belly. (Precisely how literal or figurative this is to be interpreted is not relevant to our point.) God did not confine the tempter. Satan soon struck again, working through Cain to kill Abel. This made God liable. Once again, a discordant note was struck upon the strings of history. It brings tension to our musical ears, and by the law of music we demand a harmonious resolution—the restoration of all that was lost in Adam through the blood of Jesus Christ.

God deliberately made Himself liable, not only for Adam's death, but for the death of Adam's sons and daughters (vs. 31) as well. Was a "ransom" (vs. 30) demanded of God as a result of the liability? Whether demanded or not, Jesus voluntarily gave Himself as a ransom for ALL (1 Timothy 2:6). The demand is defined in Exodus 21 as "*life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth,*" etc. And so we see Christ coming down to earth in the form of a man to pay "life for life" all the demands of His own law.

None of this makes God a sinner, for *He has not failed* in fulfilling ANY of His plans and purposes for creation. He planned all this tension from the beginning. He made Himself liable for the sins of the whole world and then paid its full penalty, and this is plainly stated in the revelation of His law.

If we were to ask WHY He did it this way, we would ultimately have to plead ignorance and merely accept by faith that He did indeed do it this way. If we object to it, we must re-state Paul's answer in Romans 9,

²⁰ Who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

Good and Evil are Subject to Time

Before anything physical was created, God created time. In the Bible, time is

divided into ages, and then each age is further subdivided into Jubilees (49-year periods), sabbath rest years (seven-year cycles), years, months, and days. This world-order is subject to time. This not only includes the physical creation, but also the ideas and concepts that go with it, including authority, justice, good and evil.

In ancient Greek mythology, Chronos (“Time”) was said to be the son of Earth and Heaven. He was brought to birth by Heaven (i.e., created by God), but only by means of the Earth. It was meant to portray the idea that time is temporary. In fact, mythology said that Chronos devoured his children, because all that is begotten of time will eventually be consumed by time as well.

Good and evil are children of time, and as such will be swallowed up when time is no more. Since good and evil are defined by the law of God, it is apparent that the law itself as such will also pass away. Jesus made reference to this in Matthew 5:18.

¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

When all is fulfilled at some future time, then and only then will the law pass away. It is yet with us today; but at the end of time, it will pass away along with the concepts of good and evil.

Paul told Timothy that the law was not made for the righteous but for the unrighteous, the lawless, the sinners. The law will no longer be needed at the end of time, for all will instinctively obey and glorify God in every way. In fact, this is the ultimate goal of the New Covenant. Hebrews 8:10 and 11 says,

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them.

Good and evil are products of time, not eternity. They deal with questions of defining law, which will pass away when no longer needed. It will be the same with faith, which passes away by “sight.” It will be the same with hope, which passes away when its object is realized. Of the great three concepts, only love will transcend time and will last forever (1 Cor. 13:13).

Good and Evil Can Only Exist Together

The tree in the garden of Eden contained within its fruit the knowledge of BOTH good and evil. Man does not learn one without the other. The condition that Adam was in before the fall is commonly called “innocence,” because he knew neither good nor evil. The very word “good” implies its opposite, and the awareness of one demands the awareness of the other.

This is the blackboard effect that is seen all through creation. What is justice without injustice with which to compare it? If all men are just, then neither justice nor injustice have any relevance, and some may even question their existence. What is beauty

without ugliness? What is light without darkness? What is peace without conflict?

This is the tension that God built into creation. The Persians saw it clearly and called it balance, or equilibrium, but they could not penetrate the veil beyond the bounds of time. And so they could perceive only that good and evil were equal in power, both being (they assumed) eternal.

It was the revealed *thelema* will of God that Adam and Eve NOT eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God clearly told them NOT to eat of that tree (Gen. 2:17). However, we believe that it was in God's *boulema* plan that men receive the knowledge of both good and evil. Just as Pharaoh could not resist God's *boulema* plan, neither could Adam and Eve resist it. It was in the plan, and for this reason Jesus was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 17:8).

We cannot, in this present age, fully understand why God chose to do it this way, but we accept it, because this is the revelation of Scripture. Furthermore, it has been revealed in Scripture that at the end of time, the curses of evil will be abundantly overcompensated by the blessings of good (Romans 8:18). This can only occur if evil is abolished, along with the greatest of evils, the last enemy—death.

We are constrained, therefore, to believe that all things will indeed work out for good, not merely for “the called” in the restricted sense, but in the widest sense (Rom. 8:28). It must include all men, for all men were affected by evil at the first. God's liability laws, if nothing else, constrain us to believe this. Otherwise God would be left as eternally unjust, and this we cannot believe.

Although good and evil must always be *equally existent*, this does not mean that they are equal in power. If they were equal in power, then time might never end. Time can only end when evil is totally overcome. There will be no sudden divine rush at the end of the age to snatch the good out of the jaws of a victorious evil. There will never be any doubt as to the outcome of this present conflict. Each age has a progressive revelation and outpouring of the Spirit of God, which will, in the end, enable the good to overcome all evil.

When that victory has abolished all evil, then good itself will also cease to exist, for there will no longer be any evil to give meaning to the good. Good itself will be swallowed up in the BETTER covenant (Hebrews 11:40).

Good Out of Evil

Even in the first few ages of time, when evil has the appearance of ascendancy and power, its power is only an illusion. Evil itself is real, at least on the earthly level, but it is only a precursor to good. Even as the liver uses beta-carotene to manufacture vitamin A, so also does God use evil to create good. It is all a part of God's plan in order to reveal to those who know His ways how God can and does turn all evil into good.

1. The Judgments of the Law

The judgments of the law are a necessary evil in order to bring ultimate good to the general populace. A nation must have just laws with judgments for their infraction in order to maintain stability and discourage injustices against one another. So it is with the laws of God.

We have also seen that God's judgments are given for the purpose of rehabilitating the sinner. When the court demands that the thief pay his victim double restitution, it is not only to recompense the victim for his loss, but also to teach the thief to work, rather than to steal. This allows the sinner to pay his debt to the victim, giving the sinner a sense of accomplishment and forgiveness. This is why it is of the greatest importance that the system not cripple him either physically or socially that would prevent him from working.

One of the worst injustices of the judicial system today is that when inmates are released from prison, they often find it very difficult to find work. Society never really forgives them for their sin, because they have not given the sinner opportunity to pay restitution for his crime. We criticize the Muslims for chopping off a thief's hand, because we say it is cruel. The Bible's concern is that it handicaps him in finding lawful employment in the future. Yet because we do not seem to share the Bible's concern in this important matter, we handicap him socially, if not physically. This is a sin that is perpetrated upon the sinners.

There are, of course, certain sins where man's law enforcement is incapable of bringing good out of evil. That is why God instituted the death penalty for sins for which man cannot restore the lawful order or repay restitution to the victims (for example, first-degree murder or kidnapping). Such sins must usually await a higher court at the last judgment, where resurrection restores life to the murder victim, and where it is finally possible for even the worst sinners to pay restitution for all capital crimes. In that day it will prove to be not a problem for God to right all wrongs, and more so, to bring good out of evil.

A truly godly court here on earth would be one that seeks the good of both victim and sinner in every possible case. There are also some cases where appeals are made to the higher court of God in this present age, without having to await the final judgment at the Great White Throne. David, for example, committed both murder and adultery, but his case was judged directly by God, because David repented and appealed the case to Him directly. God did judge David with wars and family troubles for the rest of his life. It was a lake of fire to him, a "second death," but well worth it in the long run. His present evil was turned into good, for David understood the purpose of God's judgments. In submitting to the judgment and purification of God in this age, David avoided judgment in the next age, and God called him "a man after His own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14).

At the Great White Throne Judgment, the law will go forth to right all the wrongs that remain in a state of tension. Yet even here, it serves a dual purpose: to recompense the victim, and to teach the sinner righteousness. It gives justice to the victim and forgiveness to the sinner.

The following is a very basic example of how God brings evil upon both evildoers and believers for a good purpose.

2. Joseph and His Brethren

Joseph had a very special calling. His father knew it (Genesis 37:10,11); his brothers knew it (Genesis 37:8); and obviously, Joseph himself knew it. But like all young people (and some older folks as well), he needed some seasoning, and God had the

perfect plan for this. There is nothing like adversity to mature and balance us, provided we do not become bitter against God. Adversity brings the elect (as Jacob-Israel) to maturity and the non-elect (as Esau-Edom) to a state of bitterness.

Joseph's brethren sold him as a slave into the land of Egypt. There Joseph matured in Christ as a slave and in the dungeon for twelve years, while Jacob mourned the loss of his son, whom he thought was dead. The suspense and tension in the story is breathtaking.

Finally, God brought the sons of Jacob into Egypt to buy grain during a famine, and by this time Joseph had become the Prime Minister of the land. Joseph soon revealed himself to them, and the family moved to Egypt, where Joseph cared for them. But when Jacob died, Joseph's brethren became uneasy, thinking that Joseph would still carry a grudge against them for selling him into slavery. Joseph's answer is a classic, which shows not only love, but also a deep understanding of the mind and plan of God. Genesis 50:19 and 20 says:

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?

²⁰ And as for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

Joseph had matured spiritually and recognized the sovereignty of God in all things. He knew from personal experience that God had worked all things for good in his own life. Joseph's brethren had indeed "thought evil" against him. They had deliberately sinned against him by selling him into slavery, and so they had violated the *thelema* short-term will of God. This was undeniable. But Joseph also recognized that all this had been a necessary part of God's *boulema* long-term plan, in order to bring life to many people. It was God's plan from the beginning that Joseph rule in Egypt; but in order to mature him and prepare him for that calling, God saw fit either to *cause* or *allow* his brethren to do him evil, which God then turned into good.

If Joseph had escaped from prison before the time, or if he had been released early, no doubt he would have gone immediately home to his father. After all, he must have realized that his father, Jacob, was heartbroken at his disappearance. It speaks volumes that after Joseph was elevated to Prime Minister, he did nothing to inform his father of his whereabouts for nine years. All through the seven years of plenty, Joseph remained hidden. In the first year of the famine, his brothers came to buy grain, but he still did not reveal himself to them. Not until the second year of the famine, nine years after his elevation, did Joseph reveal his identity to them. His silence was an act of faith. Such faith and patience can only be explained by spiritual maturity.

When Joseph was yet in the prison before being elevated to Prime Minister of Egypt, God taught him the principles of faith. It took years for Joseph to come to grips with his circumstances. It must have taken years to forgive his brothers for their sin against him. It must have taken quite some time to forgive God for allowing all this evil to happen to him. When he finally learned that God's purpose was not to punish him but to teach him to rest in God's disciplines, when he finally understood that God had directed his circumstances with the view to his good, and when he finally learned to give thanks in everything—then he was ready to enter his calling. When he came into

agreement with God and could rest in Him, knowing that he was precisely where God wanted him to be for the moment—then he had the kind of faith God required for such a high calling.

Joseph's elevation to Prime Minister proved to him that that God had used all this evil for a good purpose. Joseph's bitterness toward his brethren was then fully overcome, for he now could actually THANK them for what they did to him.

There are so many Christians today who do not know this great truth. They are out there fighting the devil every day, instead of glorifying God. They see the evil that Joseph's brethren did and lose their composure, because they do not see the hand of God working all things out for good and for the glory of God. They view Satan as the creator of evil in the world, without recognizing that all of God's adversaries are His servants, sent to execute judgments and perfect the elect.

All of God's people experience evil in some manner—some more than others. At first, we are shaken and tend to react to the evil, rather than look to God for the reason and purpose in our lives. While we are yet spiritually young, we do not see the hand of God in evil things, and so we fight the evildoers, or Satan. In doing this, we take our eyes off Jesus even as Peter did, and we begin to look at the wind and waves around us. Soon we find ourselves overwhelmed by the problem. Yet we see Jesus walking on the water, totally unaffected by the same wind and the same waves. He did not calm the sea to make it easier for Peter to walk on it. He desired that Peter learn to focus on Him, without being distracted and motivated by outward circumstances.

Focusing upon the evil around us only makes us bitter, because we soon find that there is always more evil than we can overcome. The key to eradicating all bitterness from the heart is to understand the purpose of evil and to know why God had brought it into our lives. Only when we have seen God's good purpose will all bitterness melt away. Without an experiential knowledge of how God works everything out for their good, Christians today cannot truly enter God's rest. They cannot truly give thanks to God in everything, if they still view their difficult circumstances as a curse from Satan. They will remain in their own prison until they learn how to declare the Jubilee and make its principles a way of life.

3. David Numbers Israel

When Israel fell into sin during the last part of David's rule, we read the following in 2 Samuel 24.

¹ Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

The same story is told in 1 Chronicles 21:1, but here we find an interesting difference in the story: "*Then SATAN stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.*" We might ask, who caused David to sin? Was it God or Satan? Or perhaps it was David himself, since we see later that David took full credit for his sin (2 Sam. 24:10). The fact is, all three were involved, but on different levels. David took the proper attitude in taking responsibility for his sin. On the level of God's *thelema* will, David had violated the Law by not collecting the soldier's ransom (a half-shekel each, Exodus 30:12-16) to atone for their souls, that they not die in battle. In exposing them to mortal danger, he sinned and

therefore needed to repent. But yet 1 Chronicles 21:1 claims it was Satan who tempted David to sin. On the highest level of God's *boulema* plan, God takes full credit for doing it (2 Samuel 24:1).

This is not a contradiction, any more than where one report says, "The President won the battle;" another says, "General Quadsteller won the battle;" and a third report says, "Our brave soldiers won the battle." All three are correct, but on differing levels of truth.

In this case, God wanted the job done, and so He did it through Satan, who tempted David to do the actual sin. And once again, God's plan was carried out perfectly. David sinned, because he failed to observe divine law; God did NOT sin, because He succeeded in His plan. What was that plan? It was first to judge Israel for sin. Secondly, the plan was to expose David's lack of the knowledge of sin, so that he could correct it. Thirdly, it was to provide opportunity for David to purchase the threshing floor of Ornan, which was to become the future site of the temple of Solomon. Once again, God had a plan, an overall goal. He could have gotten there without the problem and conflict with evil, but he did not. Turning evil into good was also part of the plan.

4. The Lesson of Job

The book of Job is the treatise that God inspired in order to teach us the subservience of Satan. While some may believe that "Satan" here is only a human being, it matters little for our purposes. Either way, the principle is maintained. Satan needed permission from God to do anything to Job. God gave him such permission in 2:6 and 7.

⁶So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life." ⁷Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

What follows is a commentary on the reason and purpose of suffering in the earth. Job had three friends who each argued from a different point of view, but none of them understood the mind of God.

Eliphaz argued from *human experience*: you reap what you sow in life, so Job's troubles are because he must have sinned.

Bildad said his problem was *bad karma*: Job's troubles are because he sinned in a past life and is now paying for it in this present life.

Zophar argued from *human merit*: all are born rebellious and are responsible to purify their own hearts to avoid these judgments of God. Wisdom and purity will merit God's favor.

Almost all men would answer in one of these three ways. The religions of the East argue like Bildad. The Greek philosophers and many Christians would argue like Zophar. Phariseeism and much of modern Christianity would argue like Eliphaz. Yet they all fell short of understanding the mind of God, because they did not comprehend the plan and purpose of God. Only Elihu had the answer, which we will summarize:

"You think that you are more just than God. You have said there is no gain

in trusting in His righteousness. You have questioned if perhaps there is more profit in NOT following Him. When men are oppressed by a tyrant, they cry out for help, but no one ever seems to ask God for answers. When they do, He does not answer because of their pride in thinking that God is unjust and unfairly treating them. If the righteous are bound in the stocks with trials, it is that he may show them their deeds and their sins which have sprung from pride. In this way he opens their ears and instructs them to turn from their iniquity. If they hear His voice, they will prosper in peace and righteousness; if not, they will perish by the sword and die not knowing why. So take heed. Do not tell God, ‘You have done wrong.’ Remember to extol His work, rather than tell Him how to run the universe.”

As it turns out, Job’s troubles came only because God wanted him to understand that we must not be bitter against God for allowing us to have adversity. We must not accuse God of being unfair or unjust toward us.

When evil comes upon us, our pride immediately begins to surface. We treat God as though he were unjust. Such an attitude presupposes that we know better than God what justice really is. And so God sends adversity upon us, even to our breaking point, in order that we may obtain a deeper understanding of the justice of God. We learn that His “injustices” are only temporary, and that He knows how to turn these “evils” into good.

Once we really begin to believe this, we enter upon the true life of faith, where we view all our adversaries ultimately as tools of God to train us as His sons and daughters. That is the place of rest, which God invites us to enter today.

5. The Death of Jesus

It could be said that the death of Jesus was the worst evil ever done in the world. Yet what Christian could doubt that it was also the greatest good? Can there be any doubt that God turned the greatest evil into the greatest good? The crucifixion became the instrument of the salvation of the world.

Once again, God’s *thelema* will was thwarted in order to accomplish the hidden *boulema* plan of God. God’s will was that all men everywhere accept Him as the Messiah. God’s plan was that he would be “despised and rejected” (Isaiah 53:3). His death was an integral part of the plan. Without His death on the cross, the whole plan would have failed, and God would have become a sinner.

Caiaphas could no more have refused to crucify Jesus than Pharaoh could have let Israel go. It was all part of the plan. Caiaphas was held liable, of course, even as Pharaoh, Esau, and even David were held liable. Yet the liability is limited to the level of the *thelema* will. God alone takes responsibility for the *boulema* plan.

Did Caiaphas sin in doing this? Yes, of course he did. Did God sin? Absolutely NOT. God did not fail in the goal that was set before Him by the counsel of His own will. In the divine plan Jesus was crucified from the foundation of the world.

When men do evil (as defined by the divine law), it is sin to them, because they violate the standard that God has given to men. When God does evil, it is always in

accordance with His plan, which is His own standard of measure. If this sounds unfair or unjust, we simply refer the reader to the book of Job for a lesson in pride. We are not God; we are not always capable of bringing good out of evil, as He is. Our concept of justice and righteousness is warped by the death that resides in our souls. We need, above all, to have faith in Him that He knows what He is doing, and He does all things well.

The Tension Resolved

Universal reconciliation is God's final solution to the tension in creation brought about by the "temporary injustices" which He Himself instituted. The divine law defines the judicial question by insisting that God take responsibility for all "injustices" that He does or allows to be done. The Biblical account leaves us no alternative but to justify God by universal reconciliation. No other solution is adequate to ease the tension that He imposed upon creation by subjecting all to futility. Only when we recognize this can we resolve the greatest philosophical question ever conceived by man—the origin, purpose, and end of all evil.

APPENDIX 1

Augustine's Argument on the Duration of Punishment

The City of God, XXI, xi

“Moreover, some of those against whom we are defending the city of God think it unjust that a man should be condemned to eternal punishment for crimes, however great, committed in a short period of time. As if any just law would ever make it an aim that punishment should equal in length of time it took to become liable to punishment!

“Cicero writes that there are eight kinds of penalties provided by law: fine, imprisonment, scourging, retaliation, loss of status, exile, death, slavery. Which of these is restricted to a period short enough to match the swiftness of the crime so that punishment is as brief when inflicted as the brief span in which the crime is found to have been perpetrated -- unless it be in retaliation? For that concerns itself to make each man suffer what he inflicted. Hence the precept of the law: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’

“What now? Should we suppose that a man ought to remain in chains only as long as it took to do the deed that brings him into bonds, while a slave who by word or by swift blow has offended or struck his master, justly pays the penalty of years in shackles?

“Now since fine, loss of status, exile and slavery are generally so imposed that they are not eased by any pardon, are they not comparable to eternal punishment, as far as the measure of this life allows? Note that the reason why they cannot be eternal is that the life of one punished by them is not eternally prolonged. However, the crimes that are avenged by penalties of longest duration are perpetrated in the shortest time, and no man living would propose that the torments of the guilty should be ended as quickly as the deed was done—murder, or adultery, or sacrilege, or any other crime that ought to be measured not by length of time, but by the enormity of its injustice and impiety.”

“And when a man is punished by death for some great crime, do the laws reckon his punishment by the time in which he is being executed, which is very short, or by his everlasting expulsion from the society of the living? But to expel men from this mortal city by the punishment of the first death is the same as to expel them from that immortal city by the punishment of the second death. For just as the laws of this city do not operate to recall one who has been put to death, so neither do the laws of that city operate to recall to eternal life one condemned to the second death.

“‘Then how,’ they ask, ‘is the word of your Christ true: “The measure that you give will be the measure that you get back,” if the sin in time is punished by timeless punishment?’ They do not observe that the measure is said to be the same, not because of an equal space of time, but because of the matching of evil with evil; that is, one who has done evil must suffer evil. This statement may, however, be properly applied to the

matter of which the Lord was speaking at the time, that is, judgments and condemnations. Accordingly, if one who judges and condemns unjustly is justly judged and condemned, he receives the same measure, though not the same thing, which he gave. For his act was in judging and he suffers in being judged; although in condemning he did what is unjust, in being condemned he suffers what is just.

Our Comment

Augustine's main argument is that sin may take only a moment to commit, and the punishment, or sentence of the law, may take a long time to fulfill. He gives as example, a man who might destroy another man's eye or kiss another man's wife. Both sins, he says, may take the same amount of time, but the sinners would receive differing penalties. Therefore, he argues, the length of punishment has nothing to do with the severity of the sin. And so it is "just" for God to punish men eternally for sins committed in a short period of time in this life.

The argument is ridiculous, of course. No one is silly enough to insist that punishment be of the same *duration* as the time it took to commit the sin. That is totally beside the point. It may take the same length of time to steal a sheep than to commit murder, but the penalties of each are vastly different. **The Bible insists that the punishment fit the crime, not the time it took to commit the crime.**

In God's law, judgment is proportionate to the value of the thing stolen or destroyed, not the time it took to steal it or destroy it. Augustine here is attempting to undermine this basic principle of Bible law in order to establish eternal torment. In doing so, he would argue that the divine penalty for stealing a paper clip is eternal torment in fire and brimstone. What a travesty of justice! The Bible mandates double restitution, or two paper clips to be restored to the victim.

Augustine's entire argument is philosophical, rather than biblical. He appeals to Cicero and Roman law, showing only a shallow knowledge of biblical law. By and large, this is the same problem in the Church today, for most have been taught that God put away His law.

The strange thing is, if God did that, then He would have to save all anyway. Why? Because it is by the law that God judges sin. To repeal a law is to legalize sin, because "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). If God put away His law, then at the judgment, when God accuses a man of theft or murder, the sinner could respond, "There is no law against that." Under such circumstances, God could judge no one for sin, and, in fact, would have to save all men anyway!

APPENDIX 2

The Return of the Holy Spirit

1 Peter 3:20, 21 tells us that Noah's flood prefigured baptism. We normally think of this as water baptism, but with further study we find it prefigures spirit baptism as well. This is pictured in the dove that Noah sent out.

The first time the dove was sent, it "found no rest" (Gen. 8:8), and so it returned to the ark. Noah waited for another week and then sent the dove out again. This time it returned with an olive sprout (Gen. 8:11), and Noah knew that the waters were beginning to abate. A week later, when Noah sent the dove out a third time, it did not return to the ark (Gen. 8:12).

This dove represents the Holy Spirit. The fact that Noah sent the dove out three times speaks of the three times that the Holy Spirit was to be sent into the earth in history.

The first occasion speaks of the first Pentecost of the Old Covenant at the foot of Mount Sinai under Moses' administration. The Holy Spirit was sent forth, but the people fled in fear (Exodus 20:18, 19). They did not want to hear the voice of God directly. And so the "dove found no rest" amidst the sea of people. Another ark had to be built to house His presence, the Ark of the Covenant. Thus, like the dove of Noah, the dove at Mount Sinai "returned to the ark."

The second occasion speaks of the New Covenant at the great Pentecost in the second chapter of Acts. The "dove" in this case had found a single olive sprout in the person of Jesus. At His baptism (Matt. 3:16) it lighted upon His head; later at Pentecost it lighted upon His body to complete the fulfillment of that occasion. Yet this was only a tiny portion of the promise, even as an olive sprout was only a little piece of the olive tree.

The third occasion speaks of the unlimited fulfillment, when the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh. It shall be the greater outpouring, of which the previous one was only an "earnest." Once sent, the dove shall not return to the ark, which had limited its movements. His glory shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14).

APPENDIX 3

Gregory of Nyassa

Sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:28, 32-44

32. My plan is as follows. First of all I shall expound the sense of the passage in my own words. Then I shall add the actual words of the apostle which are in accord with the sense which I shall by then have expounded.

33. So I begin by asking what is the truth that the divine apostle intends to convey in this passage? It is this. In due course evil will pass over into non-existence; it will disappear utterly from the realm of existence. Divine and uncompounded goodness will encompass within itself every rational nature; **no single being created by God will fail to achieve the kingdom of God.** The evil that is now present in everything will be consumed like a base metal melted by the purifying flame. Then everything which derives from God will be as it was in the beginning before it had ever received an admixture of evil.

34. The way in which this will happen is as follows. In our mortal and perishable nature, says Paul, there has appeared the pure and uncompounded divinity of the only-begotten. Human nature as a whole has thus received an admixture of the divine. The manhood of Christ is a kind of first-fruits of this common man, and by it humanity as a whole has been grafted on to divinity..

35. Evil was totally abolished in him who “knew no sin,” as the prophet says, “neither was any guile found in his mouth” [Is. 53:9]. Along with sin was abolished in him also the death which follows from it (for death has no other origin than sin). So the abolition of evil and the dissolution of death began with him. From this there followed a kind of sequentially ordered pattern.

36. In a pattern of this kind some members are further away from the prime member, in accordance with their declension from the good; others are found to be closer to it—each in accordance with its own deserts and powers. So in this case: we begin with the human element in Christ. As the recipient of divinity within himself, this man became the first-fruits of our nature. He also became the first-fruits of those who slept and first-begotten from the dead, loosing the pangs of death.

37. This Man, who was wholly separated from sin, who has destroyed the power of death in himself and overthrown its rule, authority and might, comes first. After him comes a man like Paul who imitated Christ to the full in his separation from evil; a person of that kind will follow behind the first-fruits at the advent.

NOTE: Gregory here differs from our point of view in that he interprets 1 Cor. 15:23 to mean that Christ is the Firstfruits, followed by “Paul” as an example of those who are Christ’s “at the advent.” Gregory, being a Greek, was apparently somewhat familiar with Israel’s feast days and how they apply to these resurrections.

38. Then (just to take an example) might come perhaps Timothy, who imitated his teacher to the best of his ability, or anyone else like him. So the sequence continues, the gradual declension from the good putting each man respectively behind those in front of him, until it reaches those in whom there is so much evil that it constitutes a greater proportion in them than the good.

39. In accordance with this same pattern the sequence, which leads from those least involved in evil to those who are most involved in it, produces an ordered structure of persons who are returning to the good. Then when the advance of the good has reached the furthest extremity of evil, evil will be thereby abolished.

40. And this is the ultimate goal of our hope, that nothing should be left in opposition to the good, but that the divine life should permeate everything and abolish death from every being, the sin, from which as we have already said, death secured its hold over men, having already been destroyed.

41. Now when every evil authority and rule has been abolished from among us and no passion dominates our nature any longer, it follows inevitably that with no other master over us everything will be subjected to the power which is over all. Subjection to God is total separation from evil.

42. When we all are free of evil in imitation of the first-fruits, then the whole mass of our nature will be commingled with the first-fruits and we shall become completely one body which accepts the lordship of the good and of that alone. So that the whole body of our human nature will be commingled with the divine and uncompounded nature; and therein will be achieved in us what is called the subjection of the Son—for the subjection which is established in his body is being rightly ascribed to him who makes this grace of subjection effective in us.

43. That, we believe, is the sense of Paul's teaching. Now we must quote the actual words of the apostle: [Here he quotes 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, which we will skip.]

44. That last phrase, which speaks of God coming to be in all by becoming all to each, clearly portrays the non-existence of evil. Obviously **God will be "in all" only when no trace of evil is to be found in anything**. For God cannot be in what is evil. So either He will not be "in all" and some evil will be left in things, or, if we are to believe that He is "in all," then that belief declares that there will be no evil. For God cannot be in what is evil.

NOTE: Germanus, Archbishop of Constantinople from 713-730 A.D. published a book against the idea of Universal Reconciliation. He undertook the improbable task of "proving" that Gregory of Nyassa was NOT a Universalist. He chose to blind himself to Gregory's true position. This allowed the Church to retain Gregory as one of the four great Doctors of the Greek Church, and in 787 to give him the title of "Father of Fathers," while covering up his true beliefs as clearly seen in his sermon above.

APPENDIX 4

Quotation from Augustine's The City of God in the Introduction to Book XXI

“The only one named by Augustine as a representative of the tender-hearted is Origen. Origen had gone so far as to include the devil and his angels among those who would eventually complete the punishment due, and be delivered from the tortures of hell (gehenna).

“Origen’s ‘hell’ is thus really a purgatory in which all sinners, whether men or angels, will finally be cleansed from their guilt and restored to peace with God . . .

“This view, along with other views of Origen, had already been condemned by the church as heretical [see footnote below], as Augustine points out. **But in the meantime Origen’s doctrine had enjoyed much popularity, especially in the eastern churches.** Their renowned teacher Basil himself believed in eternal punishment, but states that **most ordinary Christians believed there would be a time limit.** Among these, apparently, must be included his brother Gregory of Nyassa and his close friend Gregory of Nazianzus.

“Ambrose of Milan was a diligent student of the works of Origen, and though he did not adopt the notion of universal salvation, he does in one passage interpret hell metaphorically. There is no gnashing of bodily teeth, nor any perpetual fire of material flames, nor a material worm, he writes—these are mere vivid figures of the torments of a conscience which has awakened too late.” (quoted from Exposition of the Gospel of Luke, 7.205f, by Ambrose)

FOOTNOTE: “Pope Anastasius had condemned the books of Origen in the year 400. His letter to Simplicianus of Milan is preserved as No. 95 among the letters of Jerome.”

APPENDIX 5

The Rich Man and Lazarus

The Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) is one of the prime texts used to teach the doctrine of eternal torment. We have, in effect answered this assertion quite thoroughly in the general course of our study, but we offer this brief look at this parable as a supplement.

We must first recognize this to be a parable, rather than a literal story. It follows the same general pattern of Jesus' other parables of the Kingdom. The rich man is the villain, representing (as usual) the Scribes and Pharisees. In verse 19 they are said to dress in purple (civil authority) and fine linen (religious authority). Dressed as they were, how conspicuous they must have looked as Jesus told the story!

They also "fared sumptuously every day" (vs. 19), having access to the Scriptures daily. Yet in the hardness of their hearts, they would not believe in Jesus, though he rose from the dead (vs. 31).

In contrast, there was Lazarus, the outcast, the "gentile," who had no spiritual advantage whatsoever. To receive any spiritual food (God's Word) he had to beg, hoping for a few crumbs from the table. His only comfort was from the "dogs," a euphemism for the "gentiles." This is confirmed by Jesus' words in Matthew 15:21-28.

²¹ And Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region, and *began* to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." ²³ But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to *Him* and kept asking Him, saying, "Send her away, for she is shouting out after us." ²⁴ But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

One of the main purposes of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus was to show that a profound change was about to take place. The "rich man" was about to be judged, while "Lazarus" was about to be blessed by the Word. And so, the "rich man," the nation of Judah, "died" in 70 A.D. and was cast out. The "gentiles" then received the Gospel, and in accepting Christ, identified in His death (Rom. 6:7). And so they were blessed in "death," while the Pharisees and their "five brethren" (vs. 28) remaining in Judaism were "tormented" thereafter.

For the past 2,000 years, the Jews have been saying, “We are tormented in this flame.” But Jesus had told them by another parable in Matthew 21:43,

⁴³ Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

If we take this parable as teaching about a future punishment, there is still no reason to conclude either that the “flame” is literal, or that it is unending. Neither issue is addressed in the story, and so we would have to fill in those details by other Bible passages. This we have already done, particularly in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

As Christians, we know that Jesus paid the full penalty for our sin. If the law demanded that the penalty be eternal torment in hellfire, then Jesus would have had to burn in hell forever. He did not do this. The question is: are we yet in our sins? Or did Jesus’ DEATH or a mere 3 days pay the penalty in full?

The answer is simple. Jesus was not tormented for eternity, and He did indeed pay the full penalty for sin. Therefore, as Paul said, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), NOT eternal death, NOT hellfire, NOT some other death dreamed up in the imagination of men with which to threaten their enemies. All we need to do is see the example of Jesus to know the full penalty of sin.

In the pain He felt from Gethsemane to His death on the Cross, he paid for our personal sins, going through the “lake of fire” on this earth, even as we do on a smaller scale in the process of purification. In Jesus’ actual death for 3 days, He paid for the original sin of Adam, whose penalty was death (Gen. 2:17). It is not our intention to minimize the awful price He paid for sin. It was indeed a terrible price to pay. Yet an ETERNAL penalty is one in which there is NO HOPE of ever paying it in full. But we know that Jesus did pay it in full.

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