



*Just what did the prophets say?
Do you know? Does it matter?*

all that the
PROPHETS
have spoken

John R. Cross

ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN

Edition 3

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*...beginning with Moses and all the
Prophets, he explained to them what
was said in all the Scriptures...*

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To maintain ease in reading and remain consistent with the Scripture text chosen, in most cases I have used small initial letters for pronouns and certain nouns that relate to God. In areas where there might be confusion about who is being referred to, I have used capital letters consistent with traditional grammar rules.

All the Prophets introduces the reader to nine different translations of the Bible. None of the translations differ on content communicated nor affect the accompanying commentary.

All Scripture portions are italicized and indented. Where Scripture text is boldfaced, an emphasis has been added. Square parentheses in the Scripture text indicate additions for explanatory purposes.

PREFACE

We live in a world of many different belief systems. Whether you call them religions, faiths or cults, what people believe cannot be ignored. History is strewn with wars and scrapping over religion. In the past, these battles were fought on a local level. Now, with the advent of the global village, people of very different beliefs are being pressed up against each other, and the potential for major conflict is enormous.

It behooves us to know what our neighbours believe and why they believe it. Though we may never agree with them, when we know what people believe, at the very least, we can intelligently disagree without being disagreeable and our neighbours, being understood, feel less threatened.

All that the Prophets have Spoken is about the most widely distributed and most vehemently disputed book in history—the Bible. If you are one of those who seriously wants to understand what the Old and New Testament Scriptures are all about, then this book is for you.

I've tried to keep this book as objective as possible. That is not easy. By their very nature, the writings of the prophets demand a response. Nonetheless, I've worked to explain Scripture clearly, allowing it to speak for itself—to say what it says—but letting you draw your own conclusions. What you believe about it all is up to you.

Some may accuse me of losing objectivity because I've communicated Scripture as fact. I've felt that it was a risk I must run, as the Word of God presents itself that way. To do otherwise would not be true to the text. In writing, I was determined to not water down the message of the prophets. Scripture is quite direct about what it has to say and I've endeavoured to reflect that reality by shunning any sort of vagueness.

So, if you are one of those who would like to understand the message of the prophets as it was written long ago, come along and read *All that the Prophets have Spoken*. Their message may surprise you.

CHAPTER ONE

1 PROLOGUE

2 GETTING THINGS STRAIGHT

3 A UNIQUE BOOK

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1 PROLOGUE

The year—circa AD 33. The sun burned midday hot. All was quiet. Even the birds refused to sing in the oppressive heat. Cleopas kicked a clod of dried mud from the dusty road, drew a large breath and blew out his cheeks in a weary sigh. Squinting into the haze, he could barely make out the next ridge. A few miles beyond lay Emmaus—home. Sunset would be on them before their arrival. Normally they would have left Jerusalem sooner—after all, seven miles is a decent walk—but the events of the morning had kept them hanging back, wishing for more concrete news.

Cleopas's heavy thoughts were jerked back to the present as his irritated companion asked a question for the second time. The two of them had been discussing the day's events—the last few years' events—until it seemed no detail could be dissected more. Cleopas was tired, but more than that, he was confused by all that had transpired in Jerusalem. These days, it seemed life held more questions than answers.

Trudging down the hill they rounded a bend. It was then they met the stranger.

Hours later, the same day, the same night, when the two of them stood hot and sweaty before their friends back in Jerusalem—for it was there they had rushed—they couldn't give a good answer as to how the stranger had joined their twosome. At first, Cleopas thought he had stepped out of the shadow of a big boulder, but that didn't jive with his friend's explanation. The bottom line was, they just weren't sure where he had come from. Lamely, Cleopas had said the stranger had “kinda, well, just sort of ... appeared.” That had been met with some derisive statements about the heat and too much sun.

But of one thing they were sure. The stranger had taken that ancient collection of books, the Bible ...

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Luke 24:27 NIV

The stranger's explanation of the Holy Scriptures had made incredible sense. It was also accompanied with a rebuke.

*He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe **all that the prophets have spoken!**”*

Luke 24:25 NIV

Though Cleopas and his friend may have been slow to believe the prophets, once the stranger explained the prophets' message to them, all despondency and doubt had fled their minds. So thrilled were they by their new understanding that they had hurried all the way back to Jerusalem to tell their friends about the Stranger. Somehow, somewhere, they too needed to hear this message—the message they had heard on the road to Emmaus.

So just what did the Stranger say about the Bible—a book that has puzzled so many—that made so much sense? That is what this book is all about. And to understand it clearly, we will do what the Stranger did. We will go back to the beginning of the Scriptures for a careful look at all that the prophets have spoken.

2 GETTING THINGS STRAIGHT

When you stop and think about it, it's entirely reasonable, indeed just plain logical, to take a few hours out of your entire life to gain an understanding of the Word of God.

After all, Scripture has some profound things to say about life—and about death.

For centuries, the Bible—the collection of ancient Scriptures—has been a bestseller. It has been the most read, most translated and the most printed book in history. Anyone who claims to be the least bit informed should understand its basic content.

1-A
6:45



A PUZZLE

In many ways, understanding the message of the Scriptures is like building a house or assembling a puzzle. To interpret the Word of God accurately, the many parts must be put together in the right way. To ensure this happening, we will apply *four universal principles of learning* that are used in school classrooms every day.

1. The Priority Principle

The first principle states that when you study a new subject, *learn the most important information first*. For example, if a builder wants to teach a person how to construct a house, he will stress the importance of laying a firm foundation, erecting solid walls and finishing with a tight roof. He will leave till later such things as choosing furnishings or paint colours.

In the same way, the Scriptures cover an incredible array of topics, but not all are of equal importance. In this book we will focus on the

most significant theme in the Word of God. Once you understand it, the Scriptures will make profound but simple sense.

2. The Storytelling Principle

This second principle is intuitive. When one reads a story, one doesn't start in chapter ten, jump to chapter six, read chapter two and conclude in chapter nine. No! We all know that to make sense of a story, one needs to *start at the beginning and move step by step through to the end*. That may seem obvious, but many people tend to read the Word of God in bits and pieces, resulting in confusion.

Since much of Scripture is a narrative, we will simply follow its natural chronological progression. At the same time, we will apply the Priority Principle, covering the most important stories first, stringing them together in a row, like hanging laundry on a clothesline. Since this overview is far from comprehensive, expect some gaps in the storyline.



The gaps can be filled in later after one has the overall picture. Although this clothesline cannot include every story in the Word of God, the events covered will tie together in one continuous narrative.

3. The Mathematical Principle

The third principle takes the above progression and adds another dimension to it. In learning, *start with the simple and move to the complex*. For example, children are not taught algebra in kindergarten. Rather, they learn basic arithmetic, equations such as: one apple + one apple = two apples. Over time they move to complicated mathematics, such as $E=MC^2$. Teaching algebra in kindergarten would result in confused children.

It's the same way with Scripture. If you skip the basics, your understanding will incorporate unusual ideas, resulting in a muddled message. To avoid that problem, we will progress through the story building on previously gained knowledge.

4. The Clarity Principle

The fourth principle addresses two issues. The first area has to do with the *meaning* of certain words. Over centuries, word meanings can change, but Scripture has a system that locks the meaning of a word in place. To define a word, Scripture tells a story. Through the story we learn exactly what the word means. It cannot be changed. In this regard, the clarity principle advises us to *let the Word of God define its own words*.

The second area has to do with the study of topics. For example, normally we study sciences by subject—such as astronomy, chemistry or biology—without mixing them. For a beginner, listening to a lecture on the solar system and on the structure of the cell at the same time would be confusing. When content is new or unfamiliar, the clarity principle advises a teacher to *stick to one subject at a time*. We will be doing just that.

As we apply these four principles, we will clearly understand the Word of God; the puzzle will be correctly assembled.

1-B
1:54



3 A UNIQUE BOOK

There is no doubt about it; the Bible is a unique book. Actually, it's a collection of books, 66 in all. One author wrote the following to encapsulate the uniqueness of Scripture: "*Here is a book...*"

1. *written over a 1500 year span;*
2. *written over 40 generations;*
3. *written by more than 40 authors, from every walk of life...*
 Moses, a political leader, trained in the universities of Egypt
 Peter, a fisherman
 Amos, a herdsman
 Joshua, a military general
 Nehemiah, a cupbearer
 Daniel, a prime minister
 Luke, a doctor
 Solomon, a king
 Matthew, a tax collector
 Paul, a rabbi
4. *written in different places:*
 Moses in the wilderness
 Jeremiah in a dungeon
 Daniel on a hillside and in a palace

- Paul inside a prison*
Luke while travelling
John on the isle of Patmos
others in the rigors of a military campaign
5. *written at different times:*
 David in times of war
 Solomon in times of peace
6. *written during different moods:*
 some writing from the heights of joy and others from the depths
 of sorrow and despair
7. *written on three continents:*
 Asia, Africa and Europe
8. *written in three languages:*
 Hebrew . . . , Aramaic . . . and Greek . . .
9. *Finally, its subject matter includes hundreds of controversial topics.*
 Yet, the biblical authors spoke with harmony and continuity
 from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story. . . .”¹

This “one unfolding story” is what we want to look at—simply and without theological jargon. One unique thing about Scripture is that it claims to be God’s own words.

GOD-BREATHED

We are told in its pages that . . .

All Scripture is God-breathed.²

2 Timothy 3:16 NIV

The whole concept of God *breathing out* Scripture is a study in itself. Just as when one exhales his breath, and that breath comes from his innermost being, so all Scripture is to be viewed as the very product of God himself. God and his words are inseparable, which is one reason Scripture is referred to as *God’s Word*.

PROPHETS

Highly simplified, it can be looked at this way. God told men what he wanted recorded about himself and those men wrote it down. Most of these men were called *prophets*.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets.

Hebrews 1:1 NIV

In ancient times, a prophet was a messenger who passed on God’s words to the people. The message usually addressed aspects of daily living, but almost invariably, the prophets also included things yet to come. This foretelling of the future had a practical aspect to it. It was a potent test to determine whether a prophet was genuine.

If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken.

Deuteronomy 18:22 NIV

A prophet's message was validated by the accurate fulfillment of his prophecies. He had to be 100% correct—there was no room for error.

But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.

Deuteronomy 18:20 NIV

God guided the prophets in such a way that what they recorded was precisely what he wanted written. At the same time, God allowed the human writer to record His Word—God's Word—in the prophet's own unique style, but to do so without error. These men were not free to add their own private thoughts to the message; neither was it something they dreamed up on their own.

You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along.

2 Peter 1:20-21 NIV

God was not putting his stamp of approval on some literary effort of man. The phrase *carried along*³ is used elsewhere in the Word of God in reference to the transporting of a paralyzed man. Just as the paralyzed man could not walk by his own power, so the prophets did not write Scripture at their own inclination.

1-C
3:04



EXTREME ACCURACY

The prophets wrote God's words on a scroll, usually an animal skin or paper made from plant fibre. The originals were called *autographs*.

Since the autographs had a limited lifespan, copies were made of the scrolls—copies made entirely by hand! The writers' awareness that what was being recorded was God's own Word resulted in the most remarkable duplication job ever done. In writing the Hebrew text: *"They used every imaginable safeguard, no matter how cumbersome or laborious, to ensure the accurate transmission of the text. The number of letters in a book was counted and its middle letter was given. Similarly with the words, and again the middle word was noted."*⁴ This was done with both the copy and the original autograph to ensure that they were exactly the same.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1947, prove just how meticulous these scribes were. No significant variations were found between the Dead Sea scrolls (written in 100 BC) and

L manuscripts resulting from centuries of copying and recopying to a period of time 1000 years later (AD 900).⁵

Josephus, a Jewish historian from the first century AD, summed it up for his people when he stated, *“How firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it [is] natural to all Jews ... to esteem those books ... divine.”*⁶

These men were absolutely convinced that to meddle with the text was to tamper with God himself. We have ample reason to be assured that what we have today is essentially the same as what the prophets wrote.

TRANSLATIONS

The autographs were originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. Of course, the copies were made using the same speech. Since many of us do not know these tongues, Scripture has been translated into many other languages. These translations work from an original text that finds its roots in the ancient past.

For example, translations of the Old Testament (the Law, Writings and the Prophets) use manuscripts that we can still read today—manuscripts dating from 100 years before the birth of Christ. Jesus quoted from a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures that was completed at least 150 years before he lived on the earth. That translation still exists and can be read today. The New Testament (which covers the life of the Messiah) uses over 2700 Greek manuscripts that date from the second century. Any one of these ancient sources can be used to check the accuracy of what we presently read. Once again, it can be safely said that what the ancient prophets wrote is essentially the same as what we read today. The prophets themselves testified that God would preserve his written Word in such a way that it would never change.

The grass withers, the flower fades, But the Word of our God stands forever.

Isaiah 40:8 NASB

Jesus, the Messiah, also said:

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law [or The Holy Scriptures] until all is accomplished.”

Matthew 5:18 NASB

God is great and consistent with his character, has faithfully preserved his Word.

GOD'S WORD

Whether you remember the details about translations is not critical. The important thing to keep in mind is that Scripture claims to be God's written Word—his message to mankind. We are told that through its pages we can become acquainted with God. Such a claim should cause even the most indifferent person to pause and consider what it has to say.

Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm.

Psalm 119:89 NIV

1-D
2:11



NAVIGATION AIDS

For those unfamiliar with navigating their way through the Word of God, it may be helpful to know that most editions of the Scriptures are divided into 66 books, which are further subdivided into chapters and verses.

The Scriptures written before the coming of the Messiah are called the *Old Testament*, with the remainder being called the *New Testament*.

Historically, the Old Testament portion was divided into three categories:

1. The Law of Moses: Depending on the person, this section is sometimes referred to as the Torah, the Books of Moses, the Law, the Taurat or the Pentateuch.
2. The Writings: sometimes called the Psalms, the Books of Poetry, the Psalms of David or the Zabur.
3. The Prophets

The phrase *the Law and the Prophets* is a way of referring to the entire Old Testament, a part that comprises approximately two-thirds of Scripture.

The remaining one-third is called the *New Testament*. It includes the accounts of the life of Jesus, best known as the *gospel* or the *Injil*, depending on your background.

In many parts of the world, Scripture is referred to as the *Bible*—a Latin word simply meaning “book.” The usage of the word *Bible* should not be identified with any particular belief group. In this book we will be using terms that are found in Scripture themselves, such as *Word of God*, the *Word*, and of course, *Scripture*.

CHAPTER TWO

1 IN THE BEGINNING GOD ...

2 ANGELS, HOSTS AND STARS

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/2.html



1 IN THE BEGINNING GOD ...

God is great! Scripture declares it over and over again. God's greatness is embedded in the very first sentence of the Bible—in four very profound words. It says:

In the beginning God...

Genesis 1:1 NASB

There are no opening arguments for the existence of God—it is assumed he exists. God is just *there*.

ETERNAL

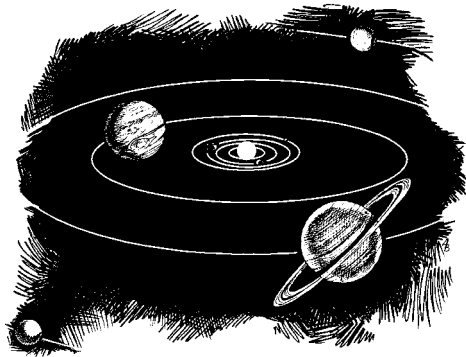
God has been there all along. God existed before plants, animals and people, before the earth and the universe. He had no beginning and he will have no end. God has always been and will always be. Scripture says that God has existed from everlasting past to everlasting future. God is eternal. Moses, one of God's prophets, penned these words:

Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth... from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. Psalm 90:2 NASB

The concept of an eternal God is difficult for us to grasp. It's so troublesome to our intellect that many people simply declare it to be impossible. But there are illustrations to help our comprehension. For example, we can compare eternity with the cosmos.

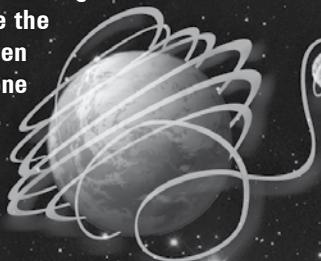
Most of us can fathom our solar system—the sun surrounded by orbiting planets. We know it's vast, but space probes have made the farthest distances seem reachable. But go a step further and begin to measure the universe. If we were to climb into a spaceship

and travel at the speed of light, we would circle the earth *seven times in one second!* How did you enjoy your tour? A little brisk, perhaps? Heading out into space at the same speed, we would pass the moon in two seconds, the planet Mars in four minutes, and Pluto in five hours. From there you are off into our galaxy—the Milky Way.



2-A
3:29

**At the speed of light
you circle the
earth seven
times in one
second ...**



**... pass the
moon in two
seconds ...**

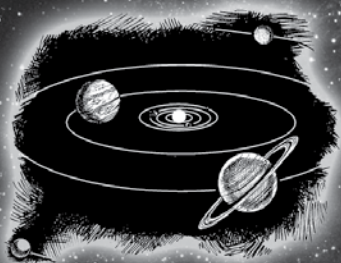


**... and Pluto
in five hours.**

**... Mars in
four minutes ...**

**At the speed of light, you will reach
the closest star in 4.3 years, which
means each second of those years
you travel 186,000 miles or 300,000
kilometres—a total distance equivalent
to 25,284,000,000,000 miles or
40,682,300,000,000 kilometres.**

**Our star, the sun, is near the edge of
the Milky Way Galaxy. Our entire solar
system with its orbiting planets could
fit in this box.**



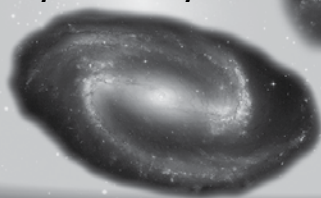
The Milky Way Galaxy

The band of stars you see in the night sky is part of a gigantic family of stars called the Milky Way Galaxy. Travelling at the speed of light, it would take 100,000 years to cross it from one side to the other. There are an estimated 100 billion galaxies in the universe, many comprising billions of stars. Galaxies come in clusters and superclusters. There are about twenty galaxies in our cluster, and thousands of galaxies in our supercluster.

Want a star named after you?

Based on the present population of the earth, you could have 16 *galaxies* named after you. That means *billions* of stars could carry your name!

At the speed of light, you will reach the next closest galaxy in 2,000,000 years ...



... and the next closest cluster of galaxies in 20,000,000 years.



At this point you have only begun to travel the universe.

Yes, the thought of an eternal God is difficult to grasp, but so is the vastness of our universe. Both are mind-boggling, yet both are real. Scripture speaks emphatically on this point. God's eternal existence is such an inherent part of his greatness that the Word of God refers to it as his name.

The name of the LORD, the Eternal God.

Genesis 21:33 NIV

MANY NAMES

God has many names or titles, each declaring something about his character—his greatness. We will look at three:

1) I AM

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."

Exodus 3:14 NASB

The closest one can get to an explanation of this statement is: *I AM the One who is* or *I AM the self-existent one*. God exists by his own power. We need food, water, air, sleep, light—an endless supply of essential items—to live, but not God. He requires nothing—nothing at all! He is the *self-existent one*, the *I AM*.

2) LORD (YAHWEH)

The title *I AM* is not commonly used in Scripture because its meaning is embedded in the word *YAHWEH*. *YAHWEH* is God's personal name, just like people are named Ken, Samir, Amy or Fatima. Bible translations show reverence for this great name by translating it with the title *LORD*.

LORD [YAHWEH], there is no one like you! For you are great, and your name is full of power.

Jeremiah 10:6 NLT

The title *LORD* not only highlights God's eternal self-existent state, but also focuses our attention on his position—a position that is higher than all others. He is *LORD* of lords.

3) THE MOST HIGH

This name ties in with the name *LORD* by emphasizing God's role as a sovereign ruler.

That they may know that You alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.

Psalms 83:18 NASB

Just as ancient empires had absolute leaders or sovereigns who reigned over their domains, so God is King of the universe, the God Most High. Even the word *God* itself emphasizes his position as supreme ruler. The word *God* means "strong one, mighty leader, supreme Deity."

*The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne.
He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them. Psalms 11:4 NIV*

God rules from Heaven. We don't know much about Heaven, but the little we do know is incredible. We will discuss this in more detail later on, but for now it is enough to know that this great God is the Supreme Ruler.

ONLY ONE GOD

The term *the Most High* means that God is unquestionably unique—another aspect of his greatness. There is no one else like him. He stands alone, the sovereign LORD of all.

I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me.
Isaiah 45:5 NKJV

Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.
Isaiah 43:10 ESV

There is no hierarchy of gods, with one big God ruling over the others. Whether self-existent or created, no other gods exist out there.

*This is what the LORD says... "I am the first and I am the last;
apart from me there is no God."*
Isaiah 44:6 NIV

Scripture is emphatic—there is only one God.

*There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to
save and to destroy.*
James 4:12 NASB

A SPIRIT

Before we leave this subject, we need to understand one last thing. Scripture tells us that God is invisible because ...

God is spirit.
John 4:24 NASB

Think of a funeral of a friend who has died. The body was there, but where was the person? He was gone; his spirit was no longer there. When we look at someone we only see their house, the human body; we don't actually see the real person, the spirit.

Scripture indicates in many different ways that man's spirit starts at a point in time and then lives on forever. But God is different; he never had a beginning and he will never end. He is the only eternal spirit living from everlasting past to everlasting future.

God: He is a *Spirit*.

He is *eternal*.

He is the *I AM*—the self-existent one.

He is the God *Most High*, the sovereign Ruler of all.

He is the *only* God.

2 ANGELS, HOSTS AND STARS

God's first creative act is revealed throughout the pages of the Bible. It has to do with the origin of spirit beings.

NAMES

Scripture calls spirits by many different names, some singular, some plural. We often call them angels, but the Word of God uses many terms to define them: cherubim, seraphim, angels, archangels, morning stars—the list goes on. Collectively they are referred to as multitudes, hosts or stars.*

*Not to be confused with stars in the night sky.

The host of heaven worships You.

Nehemiah 9:6 NKJV

They may all have personal names but Scripture only records a few, such as Gabriel and Michael.

INVISIBLE, INNUMERABLE

As with God, spirits are invisible. They do not have bodies of flesh and blood like you and me. Even though we can't see them, they must be everywhere. Scripture indicates that there are ...

...thousands upon thousands of angels.

Hebrews 12:22 NIV

The idiom used to number just those surrounding God's throne communicates an unfathomable sum.

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.

Revelation 5:11 NKJV

SERVANTS

The angelic beings were created to serve God and do his pleasure. They are called “ministering spirits.”

Praise the LORD, you angels of his, you mighty ones who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands. Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will!

Psalms 103:20-21 NLT

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve?

Hebrews 1:14 NIV

The word *angel* is derived from a Greek term meaning “messenger” or “servant.” Because God created them, they belonged to him and were to do whatever God asked them to do.

CREATOR-OWNER2-C
1:34

The concept of the creator also being the owner has lost its meaning in our modern society. I remember walking through a tribal village in Papua New Guinea. Every item I asked about—*“Whose paddle is this? Whose canoe is that?”*—elicited a response that designated an owner. Upon inquiring how they knew who the owner was, they looked at me incredulously, *“Well, the owner is the one who made it!”* The creator-owner connection was very strong. When I questioned them if it would be all right for me to break a paddle, they were just as emphatic that it would not be a good idea, unless I wanted to have trouble with the creator-owner. Taking it a step further, I asked if it was acceptable for the owner to break it. They gave a tribal shrug and a nod: *“It’s okay for the owner to break it—he made it.”*

God created the angels and so it was not out of place for them to be considered his possessions. And since they belonged to him, they were to do his bidding—as his servants, as his messengers. This was not some ancient form of servitude. There are no parallels here to forced bondage. The angels could have had no better Creator-Owner.

EXTRAORDINARY INTELLECT AND POWER

To carry out his directives, God created the angels with great intellect and power. Some of these angelic beings had more capability than others. The angels were created perfect, without any evil. But they weren’t robots either; they each had a will which gave them the ability to choose.³

SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT

Angels share some similarities with man, though they are greater than man in intelligence and power. Scripture says that God made man ...

... a little lower than the angels.

Psalms 8:5 NKJV

Though similar, angels are distinct from man. Angels never die.⁴ They neither marry nor reproduce.⁵ Though normally unseen, on certain assignments they make themselves visible. When they talk to man, the language they use is understandable to the hearer.

THE ANOINTED CHERUB

The most powerful, the most intelligent and the most beautiful spirit ever created was a cherub. His name is translated as *Lucifer*⁶ which means “shining one.”

O Lucifer, son of the morning!

Isaiah 14:12 NKJV

Lucifer was referred to as an anointed cherub. The meaning of the word *anointed* has its origins in the ancient rite of pouring oil on someone or something to set it apart to God for a special task. This act was considered sacred and not to be taken lightly.

You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God... You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created.

Ezekiel 28:14-15 ESV

It seems that Lucifer's job kept him in the presence of God at all times. Perhaps, he somehow represented the rest of the angels and led them in their worship and praise of their Creator-Owner. We will learn more about this anointed cherub later.

WORSHIP

The word *worship* means to “declare a person's worth.” Scripture says that all the angels worshipped God.

You preserve them all, and the angels of heaven worship you.

Nehemiah 9:6 NLT

Since God is the sovereign King, he rightly deserves to have his worth declared. By way of contrast, if I boast about a friend's deeds, someone could call into question whether my friend deserves as much praise as I have given him. But Scripture says that this great God is worthy of all praise. It is impossible to praise him too much.

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.

Revelation 4:11 NKJV

You are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

Psalms 86:10 ESV

ALL THE ANGELS WATCH CREATION

God's creative act had begun. Now, as the entire angelic host watched and rejoiced, God fashioned his next great work of art.

God's words to the prophet Job remind us of our Creator's incomparable greatness.

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone as the morning stars [or spirit beings] sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” Job 38:4-7 NLT

CHAPTER THREE

1 HEAVEN AND EARTH

2 IT WAS GOOD

3 MAN AND WOMAN

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/3.html



1 HEAVEN AND EARTH

The first book in the Bible is called Genesis.

Genesis means “beginnings.”

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water. God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light! God saw that the light was good, so God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” There was evening, and there was morning, marking the first day.

Genesis 1:1-5 NET

FROM NOTHING

“In the beginning God created.” To create is to exhibit profound power. It is even more incredible to realize that God created everything out of nothing. We as humans create, but only with pre-existing material. We paint pictures using oils and canvas. We build houses out of wood, mortar and brick. But when God created, he used nothing.

ALL-POWERFUL

To create on such a grand scale with no materials, no blueprints, no workshop and no tools, takes abilities totally foreign to us. Scripture tells us that creation was possible simply because God is able. God is great. God’s power knows no limit.

Great is our Lord, and mighty in power.

Psalms 147:5 NKJV

He is truly *all-powerful*.

ALL-KNOWING

He not only has the power, but he also has the knowledge. He is *all-knowing*.

Great is our Lord ... His understanding is infinite.

Psalms 147:5 NKJV

God knows everything. He doesn’t need to check with an architect or an engineer for further information. His knowledge is unlimited. God is great. In creation, God was not confined to someone else’s blueprint.

EVERYWHERE PRESENT AT ONE TIME

When man is in the process of building or shaping an object, he needs a workplace, such as a shop or studio. But God needed no

workshop in which to fashion his creation, for Scripture tells us that the Lord is *everywhere present at one time*.

“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:23-24 NIV

This triad of attributes—all-knowing, all-powerful and present everywhere at one time—independently and together—declare that God is great. And only a faultless combination of these three attributes would be able to create the complex realm in which we live.

He made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom, And stretched out the heaven by His understanding.

Jeremiah 51:15 NKJV

The angels possess none of these characteristics, even as powerful and intelligent as they are. And us? We don’t even come close to this sort of ability. For us to construct even the simplest object takes combined human effort. For example, let’s say we decide to make a metal chair. For starters we need metal. *But where do you find the right kind of metal?*

3-A
3:24

In rocks. *But who knows which stones contain the required metal?*

We need a geologist and a prospector who know a great deal about finding the rocks which carry iron ore. *Assuming we have found the right rocks, what’s the next step? The rocks are in the ground!*

We need someone with the know-how to manufacture dynamite and assorted mining equipment. We need miners who have the expertise to extract the ore safely from the ground. *But you still can’t build a chair with a mound of iron ore.*

It needs to be melted down. *Can you build a fire hot enough to melt rocks?*

We need those who know the smelting and alloy process. *So we found those fellows, but guess what?*

They just poured for us a glob of steel. At this point we might be willing to sit on the metal lump—after it has cooled down, that is! But if we are going to make a chair, it will necessitate having someone who understands how to roll that block into a flat piece of metal, just the right thickness. Then we’ll need to bend the steel and weld it.

Welding? Sounds like we need someone with knowledge in electricity and how to generate it.

As you can see, making a chair is a complicated process. And we haven't even touched on how to make paint, specifically the kind that will adhere to metal and in the colour we want.

And what about the feet of the chair? They are plastic.

Plastic? Hmmm. Doesn't that get into petroleum products? Now let me see. Drilling a well to find oil takes ... what!

And all we wanted to do was make a metal chair. To create even the simplest object takes hundreds of people with combined knowledge and allied skills. *No one person knows it all.*

None of us, human or angelic, can be compared in even the smallest way to this great God who knows all things, who has all the power to create from nothing, and is everywhere so that he can place the object he has made wherever he chooses. God stands alone.

"O Sovereign LORD! You have made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!"

Jeremiah 32:17 NLT

GOD SPOKE

The account of this monumental creative act is recorded simply and concisely. The most staggering information is stated in just a few words. For example, the biblical text makes only passing reference to the *means* by which God accomplished his creation. He didn't use hands or tools. The Lord just *spoke* the cosmos and all it contained into existence.

And God said, "Let there be light."

Genesis 1:3 ESV

The universe was created by the word of God.

Hebrews 11:3 ESV

Once again, such ability confounds our imagination. We can't comprehend speaking a metal chair into existence—let alone the universe! But then what would one expect from a truly great God? When you think about it, you would expect him to be just that powerful. The Bible confirms that fact.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth ... Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalm 33:6,8-9 NKJV

So that's the way it all started. God spoke light into existence. He named the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." According to Scripture, the first day of creation was complete.

EVERYWHERE PRESENT AT ONE TIME

Not all the attributes of God are equally comprehensible. Somehow it's easier for us to envision God being "all-powerful" and "all-knowing" than to see him being present in all places at the same time. But over and over again, Scripture teaches us that God is "everywhere-present."

When you stop and ponder the idea, it really is comforting. If I am travelling away from my family, I want to know that God is with them. But at the same time, I want the LORD to be with me. If I am in trouble, I don't want to have to "find" God to get help. I may need assistance—*now!* And, of course, I want that to be true for my family as well.

On the other hand, it can be frightening to know that God is everywhere. If I do wrong, there's no place to hide.

In the tenth century BC, the prophet David wrote these words as he was directed by God:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Psalms 139:7–12 NIV

The fact that God is *everywhere at one time* needs to be differentiated from the concept of *pantheism*. Simply put, pantheism teaches that God is *in* everything and everything is God. In contrast, we will see that the Bible teaches that the LORD is distinct from his creation—he is not part of it. Scripture defines God as a being, not some sort of abstract force or transcendent non-entity.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

Isaiah 40:28 ESV

ANCIENT BUT ACCURATE

Centuries ago, it was commonly believed that the earth was flat. This thinking never had its origins in the Bible. Scripture alludes to the spherical shape of the globe when it states:

He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth.

Isaiah 40:22 NIV

Some ancients speculated that the earth sat on a strong foundation or was supported by a mythological god. The prophet Job wrote that God ...

... hangs the earth on nothing.

Job 26:7 NKJV

Ptolemy in the second century catalogued 1022 stars, which was considered authoritative until Galileo's invention of the telescope in the seventeenth century. Though only about 5000 stars are visible to the unaided eye, Scripture from its earliest pages relates the number of stars to ...

... the sand which is on the seashore.

Genesis 22:17 NASB

Though discoveries in science confirm biblical statements concerning history, geography and the natural world, science can never prove any book to be the Word of God. Science cannot prove spiritual truth. Later, we will see how Scripture proves itself to be God's inspired Word.

2 IT WAS GOOD

God had begun his creative work. As the entire angelic host watched, the LORD had spoken the heavens and the earth into being. Day one was finished. Now five more acts of God's great drama were to follow in the next five days of creation.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. Isaiah 40:21-22 NIV

Scripture compares the earth to a tent. It's a place to dwell in, the most unique homestead in the universe. But for planet earth to be a suitable dwelling, major construction needed to be done. We see the angels hush. The curtain goes up on day two with the creation of the expanse. The expanse? What is that?

DAY TWO

God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters and let it separate water from water." So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. It was so. God called the expanse "sky." There was evening, and there was morning, a second day.

Genesis 1:6-8 NET

When God created the world, the earth was covered with water. On day two, we see the first indication that the world as originally created was different from what we now know. Scripture says God took some of the water and placed it high in the heavens. Though some have suggested that this refers to the clouds, others have theorized a canopy of water vapour surrounding the globe. Whether a canopy or not, there is evidence that the climate was different from what we now know. It seems to have been uniformly tropical. It is known that an atmosphere containing more water vapour would have achieved some sort of greenhouse effect. Later on we will see what may have changed everything to what we now know. Whatever the case, according to Scripture, God created an expanse,* probably synonymous with what we presently call the atmosphere.

*The word *expanse* is synonymous with *space* and can apply to either earth's atmosphere or deep space.

DAY THREE

At the beginning of day three, the water under the expanse still constituted one vast ocean with no visible dry land. Once again, God spoke.

God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear." It was so. God called the dry ground "land" and the gathered waters he called "seas." God saw that it was good.

God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: plants yielding seeds according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." It was so. ... God saw that it was good. There was evening, and there was morning, a third day.

Genesis 1:9-13 NET

Day three can be divided into two parts. First, we see the dry land appear. Apparently, as the ocean bottom sank forming huge basins for the water, dry land appeared rising out of the watery depths. Second, we see the creation of plants and trees.

From the very beginning, God had been preparing the world to be inhabited, and now plant life was created for our physical needs: food to eat, oxygen to breathe and wood for building.

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

Isaiah 45:18 NKJV

DAY FOUR

On the first day of creation, God had drawn back the curtain of darkness when he spoke light into existence. On the fourth day, God created the light givers. God said:

"Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs to indicate seasons and days and years, and let them serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." It was so.

God made two great lights—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night. He made the stars also.

God saw that it was good. There was evening, and there was morning, a fourth day.

Genesis 1:14-16,18-19 NET

If it seems strange to us that God would create light before he created the sun, we must remember that it is just as easy for God to create the light as it is for him to create the light givers.

I am the LORD, who made everything, who alone stretched out the sky.

Isaiah 44:24 NET

The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down.

Psalms 104:19 NIV

ORDER

The sun, moon and stars reveal that the Master Designer is a God of order. Order is the rule of the universe. It ticks with the precision of an atomic clock and indeed it is a kind of timekeeper. We write tidal charts years in advance with the confidence that they will be accurate. We launch satellites, certain that they will rendezvous with distant planets at a precise moment, just as programmed.* The whole planet relies on the regularity of the sunrise and sunset. Without that set pattern, nothing would survive.

* NASA's *Galileo* probe travelled six years before reaching Jupiter precisely as scheduled.

The order observed in the universe is the result of physical laws that govern all things. We can study those laws through various sciences such as astronomy, biology, physics and chemistry. God established these physical laws to hold the universe together with astonishing precision.

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:17 NASB

We take these laws so much for granted that we never consider what the world would be like without them. But imagine if, for a few minutes, the law of gravity was suspended. Chaos and death would reign. It would be like someone instantly removing all the traffic lights, stop signs and speed limits from our city streets. Those laws are there for a purpose. Laws define uncompromising boundaries as to how something will function.

Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun. You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth.

Psalms 74:16-17 ESV

Almost instinctively, we treat these natural laws with great respect. For example, we walk very carefully along the edge of a cliff because we know that to defy the law of gravity will have serious repercussions. *Whenever you have a law, you also have a consequence.* Unless one's a daredevil, we avoid flirting with those consequences like we avoid the plague.

These laws—this structure and order—are a reflection of God's nature. It's the way he is.

DAY FIVE

On the fifth day, God created the whole kaleidoscope of sea life and birds.

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

Genesis 1:20-21, 23 NIV

DAY SIX

The sixth day was the pinnacle of God's creative act. God began the day by creating the land animals.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so.

God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:24-26 NASB

KINDS

On days three, five and six, it is stated that plants, sea life, birds and animals were to produce according to their kinds. What does it mean when it says, “according to their kind”? Simply put, it means that cats give birth to cats, horses to horses and elephants to elephants.

Creatures can give rise to different varieties,¹ but still be the same kind. For instance, you can breed various types of horses and end up with a whole array of equines—Arabians to Clydesdales—but they are all still horses. Nothing new has been added. In fact, each of them contains less genetic information than the mongrel stock from which they were bred. On the other hand, because kinds are fixed, a farmer need not worry about his sheep interbreeding with his horses. Once again, we can see that God embedded in the system physical laws to maintain order.

PERFECT, FLAWLESS, HOLY

As the universe was created, Scripture says repeatedly that...

... God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:25 NASB

This is another of those concise statements which is loaded with meaning. When God created, he made things truly good.

As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven.

Psalms 18:30 NKJV

We as humans can never make something flawless. What we produce may be quite acceptable, but it will still have defects. But when God created, he made all things without fault.

Scripture says that God himself is perfect—without blemish. We use words like pure, holy and righteous to describe aspects of that perfection.

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 6:3 NKJV

The holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness.

Isaiah 5:16 NASB

We will take a deeper look at these words as we progress through God’s Word, but for now, all we need to know is that the words *pure*, *holy* and *righteous* are used to describe aspects of the LORD’s perfect nature.

The absolute holiness of God cannot be overemphasized. Knowing that God is righteous is foundational to understanding clearly what the LORD has revealed to mankind. It’s a piece that cannot be left out of the puzzle. Keep this in mind as you continue to read.

Perfection is fundamental to God's character—it's another aspect of his greatness. Because he is perfect, he could only make a perfect creation. Creation has changed, as we will see, but in the beginning it was just right! God said "it was good." It was perfect.

GOD CARES

God could have created all plants and animals black and white, but instead he made everything with an endless variety of pigmentation and hues. Not only did he invent colour, but also created eyes able to see the colour.

God ensured a vast variety of foods that would taste good. The LORD not only created endless flavours, but he also provided us with taste buds able to enjoy the fine nuances of a seemingly endless variety of cooking styles.

Along with many other things, he gave fragrance to flowers and he created the nose with its ability to appreciate a multitude of scents.

God could have limited his creation of plant life to a few kinds. Indeed, just a few would have provided our needs quite adequately. But no, we see an overwhelming variety. It is evident that the LORD is a God who truly cares. Scripture says that he...

...richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 1 Timothy 6:17 ESV

Not only did God have all the ability and power to create the boundless variety, but that power was combined with loving concern. God is great. He has revealed himself with acts of kindness in the world about us.

God is still impressing mankind with his creation. For centuries, much has been hidden from man's view because of our inability to see and understand it. But then, as we developed electron microscopes, atom smashers, orbiting telescopes and other technology, we were able to peer into some of those hidden areas. And we have not become bored in our discoveries. Rather, the more we discover, the more fascinated we are, the more impressed we become, and the more we are aware of what we do not know. And yet, the wonders of creation have been there all along, created by an awe-inspiring God.

Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable.

Psalms 145:3 NASB

There was yet one more step before the sun set on day six—before God's universe was complete: the creation of man and woman.

3 MAN AND WOMAN

DAY SIX (CONTINUED)

The sixth day began with the creation of animals. Now the story's focus changes. Up to this time, God had been preparing the earth to be inhabited. The watching angels must have wondered what God had in mind for the grand finale. Would the earth be for them? Whether or not such angelic conjecture went on we don't know, but certainly the way God went about the creation of man held its share of surprises.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our* image, after our* likeness. And let them have dominion...over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Genesis 1:26-27 ESV

*Perhaps you are wondering who God was talking to when he said, "Let **us** make man in **our** image." We will cover that later in the book.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

Scripture says the LORD created man in the "image of God." Now obviously this doesn't mean we are exact duplicates. None of us are all-knowing, all-powerful or everywhere present at one time. Nor does the Bible teach that we are "little gods." Rather, man is like a mirror which reflects the image of the object but is not the object itself. There is a sense in which mankind has certain things in common with God.

First of all, God created man with a *mind*. We might say that God gave us a dab of his intellect. Because we have a mind, we are able to investigate, understand and create, which are abilities God has. But although we have an intellect, we are not all-knowing. Indeed, we are born into this world with very little knowledge. All our "knowing" must be learned.

God also created man with *emotions* or feelings. The ability to feel is a very important aspect of being human. Without feelings, your response to others would be like that of a robot—cold and calculated. In contrast to an emotionless robot, Scripture tells us that the LORD is compassionate; he is tender; he feels anger when he sees injustice. A heartless, unaffected god without the capacity to feel love or show compassion would be truly frightening. God created us with feelings, because *he* has feelings.

God also created man with a free *will*. Man's ability to make decisions for himself is often taken for granted. The capacity to choose and have preferences allows man to enjoy a life filled with variety. Some like rice; others prefer potatoes. When thirsty you can have water, milk, tea or coffee, or perhaps apple, orange or coconut juice. The choices are unlimited.

The ability to choose separates us from robots which cannot make independent decisions—they only feed back what is programmed in. Man was given a will so he could freely follow God, not as a robot, but as one who has intelligently grasped that God cares for him, and therefore knows that God is looking out for his best interests.

Having an intellect, emotions and a will are all aspects of being created in God's image. There are other areas we could look at as well, but let's move on in the story. Scripture says ...

... the LORD God formed the man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7 NKJV

The words *breath of life* are often associated with the spirit or non-material side of man. This is an additional reflection of God's image, for God too is Spirit. As we stated before, spirits cannot be seen since they have no bodies. However, in man's case, God chose to provide a physical house of flesh and bones for man's spirit to dwell in—a house formed from the dust of the ground. Once formed, the body would have laid there, complete in every way, but entirely lifeless. It was when God breathed the spirit into man that the body became alive. Only God can impart life; no person or angel has that ability. Once again, we see that the LORD is completely distinct from all his created beings—he is greater than them all.

A COMPANION

The first and only man God created was named Adam, which means "man." God then created the woman.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him."

Genesis 2:18 NASB

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:21–22, 25 ESV

These few verses have generated heated arguments. Some have understood that when God made woman, he made her a second-class citizen. This is not so. God took woman out of man's side to be a companion, not from man's heel to be his slave. Adam gave his wife the name Eve, meaning "lifegiver."

THE PERFECT GARDEN

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:8-9 NLT

All the gardens and zoos of the world could not compare with God's garden. It was a perfect paradise with beauty beyond description! The weather was different too. Scripture says:

For the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth... But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

Genesis 2:5-6 NASB

We have very little idea of what Eden was like, but obviously God did not create a garden where Adam and Eve were struggling to survive. Everything they could possibly need was abundantly provided by God. It was a perfect world in which to live.

CREATOR-OWNER

God didn't ask Adam and Eve if they would like to live in Eden—he knew what was best for them. God could act without consulting anyone simply because, as Creator, he was also Owner. (Remember the tribal illustration? He who makes the canoe paddle also owns the paddle.)

The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.

Psalms 24:1 NASB

Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people.

Psalms 100:3 NKJV

Just as the angels belonged to God because he created them, so man belonged to God because the LORD was his Creator. And just as the angels were given the position of being God's servants, so God gave man the responsibility of taking care of the earth.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Genesis 2:15 NASB

Just because God did not consult with Adam and Eve before placing them in the garden, did not mean that they did not have a choice to make. God had created man with a will—the ability to choose. However, when it comes to some areas of life such as love, having the capacity to choose is meaningless unless there are alternatives. So God placed before man a very simple option involving two trees.

In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:9 NLT

The first tree mentioned is the *tree of life*. If man ate of this tree, he would live forever. No problem.

The second tree, however, came with a warning. It was the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. Adam and Eve knew about good, but evil was another matter. They had both been created perfect and their experience was limited to God's goodness. Scripture says that if Adam and Eve ate the fruit of this one tree, then not only would they know what was good but also what was evil.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Genesis 2:16-17 NKJV

Earlier on, we saw that to defy one of God's physical laws, such as gravity, has repercussions. That principle—a broken law has consequences—applies to any of God's laws or commands. In this case, God gave man one simple rule: "Don't eat the fruit from that one tree." The consequence of breaking that command was made just as plain: man would die.

This single tree was what distinguished man as a human. Man had a choice—to eat or not to eat, to obey or disobey. Given that choice, Adam and Eve were removed from the realm of robots, which can only do what they are programmed to do. There is a big difference between a person who is programmed or forced to say "I will obey you" and someone who does so of his or her own free will. Having the ability to choose is what gives the word obey meaning and depth. Choice makes a relationship genuine.

This one restriction on the first humans was scarcely a hardship. They had an abundance.

The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit.

Genesis 2:9 NLT

CREATED FOR HIS GLORY

In giving Adam and Eve a choice, God was not intending them to run off and establish their own agenda. Rather, man was created to reflect God's grandeur—to honour Him.

You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.

Revelation 4:11 NKJV

When a son is obedient to his dad, he honours his dad. So it is between man and God. Man was created with a will so that by the obedient choices he made, he would honour the LORD. Indeed, as Creator of the universe, God deserves all the honour man could give him. Showing such respect would result in tremendous benefits. Scripture says that when man fits into God's plan for him, he finds the greatest happiness, fulfillment and reality. So it was for Adam and Eve.

God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1:28 NASB

MAN—THE FRIEND OF GOD

God was committed to Adam and Eve's well-being. He was there to fill every need they had.

Then God said, "I now give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the entire earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the animals of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." It was so. *Genesis 1: 29-30 NET*

Scripture speaks of God coming in the cool of the evening to walk with man. This is a very difficult concept for us to grasp. How man could live in God's presence is beyond our power to reason—obviously, something has changed. Nevertheless, Scripture is quite clear that God wasn't a distant, elusive Creator; he was Adam and Eve's friend. Moreover, because Adam and Eve were innocent of any sort of evil or wrong, they had a perfection that allowed them to be in God's company—only perfect people² can live in the presence of a perfect God.

In life, the ideal family relationship is one in which the parents give loving care, and a child in turn gives honour to his parents

by loving obedience. This was the relationship Adam and Eve had with God. God lovingly provided for them, and they lovingly obeyed the Lord, honouring him. It was the way God created things to be.

CREATION COMPLETED

*God saw all that he had made—and **it was very good!** There was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.* *Genesis 1:31 NET*

We often start a new endeavour with great enthusiasm, but after a time, we lose interest and leave our project unfinished. God is not like that. He always finishes what he sets out to do. We may change our mind about our plans, but God never does.

The plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. *Psalms 33:11 NIV*

Creation was done. Scripture tells us that God rested on the seventh day, not because he was tired, but because his creation was complete. It was time to enjoy what he had made.



WHAT ABOUT EVOLUTION?

Scripture does not mention evolution. The creation-evolution debate has generated much controversy, couched as a debate between religion and science. This book is not written to address this topic, but here is a little food for thought.

First of all, it is not entirely safe to designate evolution as science and creation as religion. Since Charles Darwin first published the theory in 1859, classic Darwinism has been largely replaced by Neo-Darwinism and Punctuated Equilibrium—theories that differ greatly from each other. No agreed-upon body of facts exists that explains origins. Many well-studied people argue that evolution is not pure science, but embraces key aspects of religion. This religion presupposes that there is no God, choosing to put its faith in massive amounts of time and chance. They point out that “molecules-to-man” evolution violates basic laws of physics.

On the other hand, to put creation wholly in the religion category may not be correct either. A significant community of scientists has concluded that this complex universe could only exist if there was a designer (such as God), or a team of designers. Solely using science, they point out that the world has an irreducible complexity,³ at even the smallest level. They demonstrate that such universal complexity and order could only exist if it was planned from the ground up—it could not evolve by random chance. Though some of these scientists do not categorize themselves as Bible believers, many do take Scripture at face value. The latter group is often referred to as creation scientists.

Since the mid-sixties, there has been an explosion of written material on the subject (see Appendix). Much of it is readable for the lay person. I would encourage you to keep reading and studying before you make up your mind.

Some wonder about the feasibility of the creation account as it relates to the dinosaurs. From a scriptural viewpoint, there is no reason not to believe that God created them along with the rest of the animals. Evidence exists that the dinosaurs lived at the same time as man.

Others wonder about the earth's age—some say it is very old, but Scripture does not allow for eons of time. It is true that scientists have developed numerous astronomical, solar, terrestrial and biological clock models⁴ in an effort to determine the age of the universe, but while these models employ reasoned calculations, of necessity they are based on assumptions. Additionally, the computed ages have left scientists scratching their heads. Depending on the clock used, ages range from a few thousand to billions of years. Darwin theorized 400 million years for biological evolution. Today, a common estimate starts at 4.6 billion years. Whose clock is right?

Is there a reasonable answer that fits the biblical account? Going strictly by Scripture, we know that God created a mature earth. On the day of his creation, Adam could have walked among towering trees, marvelled at immense animals and gazed at stars in the night sky. Perhaps he thought, *"Wow! This place has been around for a long time."* However, God would have told him that it was, at most, six days old; he had created the whole universe in a fully functioning state. Scientists, in looking back, try to determine the past by what they observe, just like Adam. The Word of God, however, records the origins of the earth from the perspective of an eyewitness—God himself.

So, did God mean it when he said he created the universe? Who are we to believe? Whose word is to be trusted? Centuries ago, a king pondered his place in the world:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalms 8:3–9 NIV

CHAPTER FOUR

1 SATAN

2 HAS GOD SAID?

3 WHERE ARE YOU?

4 DEATH

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/4.html



1 SATAN

Creation ended with God's stamp of approval. He pronounced it "very good." All was in order. There was no pain, no disease, no struggle for the survival of the fittest, no discord and above all—no death. Between God and man there was a unique relationship, a fellowship, a friendship. Eden was the perfect place to live. Everything was very good.

But today we have pain and disease and only the fittest survive. At times we wish that verbal discord was our only problem. Instead, at any given time, the tyranny of war dominates in many parts of the globe. Life seems rife with bullies, the big man picking on the little man. Whether in family or government, abuse of power nags society. Everything runs down, breaks down or wears out. From every corner of the animal kingdom to all mankind, life involves constant struggle. The world is *not* a "very good" place. What happened?

LUCIFER

It all goes back to the garden of Eden. Scripture says of Lucifer:

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering.

Ezekiel 28:13 NASB

Lucifer, you will remember, was the most powerful spirit God created. His name means *morning star*. He belonged to the angelic order called *cherubim* and was selected by God for special responsibilities that took him into God's presence.

You were an anointed guardian cherub... you were on the holy mountain of God.

Ezekiel 28:14 ESV

Lucifer was perfect. He is described as having incredible beauty and wisdom.

You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created.

Ezekiel 28:15 ESV

You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Ezekiel 28:12 NASB

Although Lucifer was the most powerful angel, there is no direct indication that he ruled the other spirit beings.

PRIDE

When the next event in history occurred is open to debate. It probably took place sometime soon after creation was completed. There may be a difference of opinion over *when*, but *what* happened is very clear. The Bible says Lucifer became proud. His beauty and power "went to his head" so to speak. With pride came ambition. Five times Lucifer

said, “*I will*.” A whole study could be done on these “*I will*’s,” but, in brief, it’s enough to say that Lucifer wanted to stage a celestial revolt.

O morning star, son of the dawn... You said in your heart,

“I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars [or angels] of God;

I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.

I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.”*

Isaiah 14:12-14 NIV

*The Most High is one of God’s names.

Not only did Lucifer want to take over Heaven, but he was resolved to be like the Most High. Lucifer was determined to lead a coup d’état to replace God with *himself*. Then *he* would be the leader of all the angels and the universe would be *his* to rule. Lucifer’s heart was bursting with prideful ambition.

The only loophole in Lucifer’s plan was that God knew all about it. God is all-knowing and Lucifer’s thoughts did not escape him. The Bible says that God hates pride. It’s a self-centred form of sin and the first on the list of things he detests.

These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look...

Proverbs 6:16-17 NKJV

Lucifer was deliberately going contrary to God’s plan for him. We must remember that God did not create angels as robots. They were created with a will. Their choice to serve was an expression of willing submission to the sovereign God. But Lucifer became dissatisfied with being an angel. He had something bigger and better in mind. He became proud and chose to rebel. Lucifer despised both his design and his Designer. The dictionary says that to despise means “to regard with contempt, to look down upon, to dislike intensely, loathe.”

God called Lucifer’s attitude *sin*.

JUDGMENT

Because God is perfect, he could not tolerate Lucifer’s sin as if it did not matter. *Perfection, by its very nature, demands the absence of imperfection.* We will see this truth repeatedly as we progress through the writings of the Prophets.

God, who is right (*righteous*), can have no part with wrong.

God’s *holiness* leaves no room for sin.

God, who is *sinless*, cannot tolerate sin in his presence.

This is a reality as certain as any physical law that governs the universe. God's response to Lucifer's sin was immediate. He expelled him from his position in Heaven.

You sinned. So I banished you in disgrace from the mountain of God. I expelled you, O mighty guardian, from your place among the stones of fire. Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. Your wisdom was corrupted by your love of splendor. So I threw you to the ground.

Ezekiel 28:16-17 NLT

Lucifer did not go without a battle. He was still a powerful being and, on top of that, many other angels followed him. Scripture gives some precise details of what happened. To help you understand whom the text speaks of, certain words have been highlighted to tie the context together.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon ... His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth ...

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.¹

Revelation 12:3-4,7-9 NIV

DEVIL, SATAN, DEMONS

The text indicates that one-third of the angels followed Lucifer in his rebellion. Lucifer became known as the *Devil* or *Satan*. Just as God's names describe his attributes, so Lucifer's names reveal his character. Satan means "adversary" or "enemy"; Devil means "false accuser" or "slanderer." The rebellious angels that followed Satan were now called demons or evil spirits.

LAKE OF FIRE

When God cast the Devil and his demons from Heaven, it was only the first phase in judging these rebellious spirits. Scripture says that God has a place of final punishment, an ...

... eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:41 NET

This location is commonly referred to as the Lake of Fire. Often cartoons are drawn depicting Satan and his demons standing waist-deep in flames, conniving and plotting mischief. However, the Word of God tells us that Satan is not yet there. He was cast out

of Heaven, but not into the Lake of Fire. Later, after many events involving him and his demons, Satan will be forever confined to this place of punishment. Referring to this future time, Scripture says:

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire ... And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:10 NKJV

4-B
0:29

Although God had expelled Satan and his demon followers from his presence, they retained their immense power and intellect. Now they were enemies of the God Most High. It would be all-out war. Satan would be against everything good, everything that God planned to do, and everything that God stood for. As we will see, Satan would fight dirty.

2 HAS GOD SAID?

When God created man, he didn't just place him on earth and walk away. Holy Scripture says that God visited Adam and Eve in the garden and, in the casual way it's mentioned, one can assume that this was a regular event. Adam and Eve were on intimate terms with their Creator-Owner and God took care of their every need.

THE DECEIVER

But then Satan slinked into the garden. He did not announce who he was and what he was about. Satan is much too subtle for that. Scripture tells us that Satan is the great deceiver—the Devil. He is incapable of telling uncorrupted truth.

The devil ... was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. *John 8:44 NIV*

The word *lie* in the original Greek text is *pseudos*—a conscious and intentional falsehood. We use the word ourselves. It implies “imitation.”

Several years ago, I was reading an article on Satan in a popular news magazine. He was illustrated as having a red body with horns on his head, a pointed tail and carrying a pitchfork. The overall rendering was hideous. According to the Bible, that picture is deceptive. Scripture says ...

... Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. *2 Corinthians 11:14 NASB*

He comes in all his splendour, mimicking God as closely as he can. A better picture of the Devil might have been a shining angel or a smooth-talking man dressed in the finest religious robe. Satan loves

religion. He imitates the truth, but cannot be trusted, because by his very nature, he is an impostor, a counterfeit, a teller of falsehoods. I am sure Satan was quite happy with the “red suit, pitchfork-in-hand” drawing. It’s easier to deceive people if they’re looking in the wrong direction for the wrong thing.

DECEPTION

So Satan arrived in the garden of Eden with all the subtlety he could muster. He came in the embodiment of a snake, a reptile that is often identified with the Devil. Scripture records several incidents of evil spirits living inside both humans and animals, speaking through them or causing them to act abnormally. On this occasion Satan spoke through the reptile. He addressed Eve:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” Genesis 3:1 NIV

The fact that a snake could speak did not seem to disturb Eve. No doubt every day she discovered a new and fascinating part of God’s creation. Perhaps she thought this was just another one of those new creatures. We don’t really know.

DOUBT

Whatever the case, it is interesting that Satan approached Eve with a question about God. He planted something in her mind that she had never considered: the creature can question the Creator. The question came in a slightly condescending tone, “Did God really say . . . ? I mean, *really*—did God *really* say that?”

With his “you’ve got to be kidding” approach, Satan implied that man was naive to accept the LORD’S word at face value.

“Perhaps God is holding back something good from you. How do you know? Maybe the Lord isn’t as good and loving as he makes himself out to be.”

There was a hint that God wasn’t being completely honest, not entirely forthright. Satan passed himself off as being concerned for man, looking out for man’s best interests. The Devil counterfeited God’s goodness. His twisted logic questioned God’s Word and in questioning, he planted doubt.

In addition, Satan grossly overstated God’s prohibition. God had *not* forbidden eating from *every* tree. He had only mentioned *one* tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But the overstatement produced the desired reaction.

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

Genesis 3:2-3 NIV

Eve tried to defend God, even though the LORD does not need to be defended. In her zeal she added to God’s command. God had told man that he should not *eat* of the tree, but he had never said they could not *touch* it. When you *add* to God’s Word you always *take away* something from it. Getting people to add or subtract their own ideas from the Word of God is the sort of math Satan specializes in. The addition was oh, so little, but it was all that Satan needed. A crack had appeared in the dike.

DENIAL

*“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil.”*

Genesis 3:4-5 NIV

Not content with questioning God’s Word, Satan outright denied it. He blatantly called God a liar. He suggested that the reason the tree was forbidden was because God feared Adam and Eve would learn too much. Cleverly, Satan mixed truth with error. It was true their eyes would be opened and they would know good and evil, but it was false that they would be like God with all his attributes. Satan was deliberately and knowingly lying.

DISOBEDIENCE

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Genesis 3:6 NIV

Satan had succeeded. You can almost hear his howl of laughter echoing through the garden. As usual, Satan did not hang around to help pick up the pieces. He never does. Scripture says:

The devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8 ESV

The Devil leaves the bones, picked clean. He may come across as a great provider—providing pleasure, fun, a good time—but it’s only temporary and often very empty. In reality, Satan never gives. If he imparts anything, it’s only gut-wrenching heartache.

Over the years some have blamed the woman for this outright disobedience against God’s command. However, throughout Eve’s

entire conversation with Satan, it seems that her husband was with her. Adam could have prevented his wife from eating the fruit and certainly did not have to eat the fruit himself. But they both ate.

What Adam and Eve did is similar to children playing in the street against their mother's instructions. The mother tells her children, "Do not play in the street; you could get hurt or even killed by a car." However, the disobedient youngsters think they know "better-than-mom" what is safe and fun. They are showing that they don't entirely trust their mother's knowledge of safety. They are disregarding her authority. In the same way, Adam and Eve sinned when they felt they knew "better-than-God" what was good for them. Their choice made a statement. They didn't quite trust their Creator—they weren't sure God was telling the truth.

Adam and Eve had all the reasons in the world to tell the Devil that *he* was the liar, but they chose to believe Satan instead of God. They disobeyed God's clear instructions and joined the Devil's rebellious ranks. Scripture says:

Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* James 4:4 NASB | *The world as influenced by Satan.

That's the natural outcome of choosing sides. Adam and Eve had abandoned their friendship with God and joined Satan. They had rejected a perfect world to experiment with a forbidden one.

A BROKEN FRIENDSHIP

But such a choice has ramifications. As we saw before, a broken law has consequences. Scripture teaches us that sin's effects are costly. Adam and Eve's defiant choice to follow Satan's lies opened a vast gulf in the relationship between God and man. A perfect God could not allow mixed loyalties, half friendships or partial betrayals. Unless there was trust, no relationship could exist. The friendship was over.

*Therefore God gave them... the desires of their hearts... They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!*²

Romans 1:24-25 NET

FIG LEAVES

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

Genesis 3:7 NKJV

Adam and Eve immediately sensed that something was wrong. They had feelings they had never experienced before—very uncomfortable ones—called guilt and shame. They were devastated. God's Word

says they were afraid and for the first time they realized they were naked. Casting their eyes around for a solution ...

... they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Genesis 3:7 NKJV

Perhaps they thought that if they fixed up their outward appearance, God would never notice that things had changed on the inside. They would just gloss things over and pretend everything was okay. It was man's first attempt to make things right in a world gone wrong.

There was only one problem with the fig leaf solution: it didn't work. Having a good outward appearance did not remedy the inner reality. Perfection was gone. Feelings of guilt churned within. The condemnation remained.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:8 NKJV

Only guilty people run and hide; you don't hide from a friend. A barrier, a chasm now existed between God and man. The friendship was over.

[Video Clip continues with **Is God Picky?**]

WHAT ABOUT EVIL SPIRITS, JINN AND BLACK MAGIC?

All around the world, people have devised ways to overcome the powers of evil spirits. Some wear charms or amulets. Many place fetishes in their homes, drink potions or visit their spiritual guides. Others invoke the name of God or use special prayer formulas before entering a house or a car, hoping to be protected from accidents. Still others offer sacrifices to "protector spirits" in an attempt to ward off evil.

All these ideas are from men and not from God. Scripture teaches us that Satan and his demons can perform certain kinds of miracles, but though powerful, evil spirits are not *all*-powerful. We do not need to live in fear of the spirit world if we listen to God, who is infinitely more powerful than all the evil spirits and black magic combined.

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe.

Proverbs 18:10 NKJV

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might ... with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Ephesians 6:10,16 NASB

Is God Picky?

Some may say, “But the sin was over such a little thing—just a bite of fruit!” True. God had not put a big stumbling block in man’s path. There were dozens of trees from which Adam and Eve could have eaten. This was the smallest of tests, but it defined man as being human—as having a free will.

Suppose a young lady had a fiancé who seemed to be the nicest person on earth. He showed real love for her: going out of his way to do special things for her, comforting her when she hurt, sharing in her humour, telling her he loved her. Then she found out he had no choice—that he was programmed to be loving. Well, it would be a terrible disappointment! It would all seem so artificial, so meaningless, so empty. And it would be.

Man was given a choice, a simple one, which was very easy to keep. But this one choice made a huge difference. Having this choice: *to eat or not to eat*

to obey or disobey

to love or not to love ... defined man as human.

Man was not a robot. Man was able to show his love and respect for God by choosing to obey him.

Although the test itself may have seemed a small concern, it is a serious thing to disobey the LORD in even the smallest of matters. The Bible says that God is perfect—he is holy and righteous—he cannot tolerate even the least of sins. It states explicitly that to disobey is wrong. It is sin.

3 WHERE ARE YOU?

Satan had deceived Adam and Eve into thinking they could be equal with God. That was exactly what the Devil had craved for himself. But God hadn’t created man to be governed by his own instincts or ideas. The important thing was to do what God said, and he had said:

“Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:17 NKJV

But they had eaten and, in an instant, everything had changed. It happened just as God said. His word had not changed. It never does.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:8 NKJV

It's not recorded what Adam and Eve were thinking as they crouched out of sight in the shrubbery of the garden, listening to the LORD God approaching. But if you ever did something wrong while your parents were gone, and then you saw them arriving home ... well, you get the idea. However, it wasn't their parents Adam and Eve had offended. Rather, they had disobeyed the word of the LORD of the universe, the holy sovereign God. What would their Creator-Owner say? What would an almighty, all-powerful God do?

Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

Genesis 3:9 NKJV

Adam and Eve poked their heads out, their faces masked with innocence. "Ahh, are you looking for us?" Adam spoke.

"I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

Genesis 3:10 NASB

He spoke, but he erred. Like a boy playing hooky from school and then writing his own absentee note signed, "My mom," Adam overlooked the fact that he had never felt fear before, and that his nakedness had never bothered him. God said:

"Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

Genesis 3:11 NET

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS!

Why was God asking all these questions? Did not an all-knowing God know *where* Adam and Eve were hiding? And would not God know *why* they were feeling naked? Was the LORD's knowledge limited so that he had to ask the culprits whether they had eaten the forbidden fruit? The truth of the matter was that God knew *exactly* what had occurred, but he was asking questions to help Adam and Eve sort out in *their* minds precisely what had happened. They had disobeyed the LORD! They had trusted Satan instead of God.

As we go through Scripture we will see that God often questions man to help him see things clearly.

GOD'S FAULT

The LORD's questions also gave Adam and Eve an opportunity to acknowledge their sin on their own.

The man said, “The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.”

Genesis 3:12 NET

Uh-oh! Adam admitted to eating the fruit—sort of—but only because *that woman* God created gave him the fruit. Obviously, Adam felt he was a victim! As Adam saw it, it was all God’s fault. If God hadn’t created the woman, then the woman wouldn’t have given him the fruit, and then he wouldn’t have eaten. Thus Adam put the ultimate blame for his sin on God!

So the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman replied, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”

Genesis 3:13 NET

Eve also passed on the blame for her sin. In her mind, it was the snake’s fault and, of course, if God hadn’t created snakes, then she wouldn’t have sinned either!

The truth of the matter was that both Adam and Eve had chosen to sin of their own accord. God had given them an opportunity to freely acknowledge their sin, and they had failed—they had refused to admit their guilt.

What they said:	What they should have said:
Adam: <i>The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”</i>	“God I have failed you miserably. I have disobeyed your clear directions to not eat of the fruit. I have sinned. Please forgive me.”
Eve: <i>The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”</i>	“Lord God, I too have sinned by disobeying your command. Please tell me how our relationship can be restored to what it was.”
Victim mentality Blames others	Responsible for own actions Seeks God’s solution to restoration

Adam and Eve had *done* the wrong thing. Now they had *said* the wrong thing. Their feelings of guilt and shame should have caused them to confess their sin to God. Instead, they added sin to sin by not accepting responsibility for their disobedience. Yet God did not annihilate them. If we had been the judge, jury and executioner, we would have given the thumbs down and condemned them both. But God shows compassion far beyond anything we can imagine.

A PROMISE

This initial sin of man had severe consequences for the rest of mankind. As we will see, Adam and Eve were acting on behalf

of the whole human race. Their sin brought a curse, but God in his love also gave a promise.

The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this . . . I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Genesis 3:14-15 NIV

4-D
1:25

These sentences deserve a closer examination. God was not talking about women and snakes having an aversion for each other. The promise had two facets:

The Devil and his followers	The Woman and her male offspring
So the LORD God said to the serpent , “Because you have done this . . . I will put enmity between you ... between your offspring ... your head , and you will <u>strike</u>	and the woman, and . . . and hers [offspring]; ... he will <u>crush</u> . . . his heel .”

The LORD God was saying that he would someday deliver man from Satan. There would be a male child, born of the woman, who would crush Satan’s head—a fatal wound. True, Satan would also wound the child, but only with a strike at the heel, a temporary injury that would heal.

This was the first of many promises to come about the future offspring of Eve. This male child would be known as the Promised Deliverer, because he would *deliver* or *save* mankind from the consequences of sin and the power of Satan. This must have been very good news to Adam and Eve.

This promise of a Deliverer added another name to the list of terms that reveal God’s character. He would be known as the *one who saves* or the Saviour.

*There is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a **Savior**;
There is none except Me. “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of
the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.”* *Isaiah 45:21-22 NASB*

A CURSE

As we saw before, sin has its consequences. It always does. Just as defying the law of gravity brings broken bones, so violating God’s Word has ramifications. God could not condone Adam and Eve’s sin. He could not say, “Oh forget it” or, “You couldn’t help it. We’ll pretend it never happened” or, “It was just one little sin.” No. The damage was done. Adam and Eve were guilty. One sin brought

judgment. One sin brought fear and shame. One sin brought more sin. The earth and everything in it suffered from the curse. The animals, the sea, the bird life, even the very ground was affected. No longer was creation perfect. As a result of the curse, Scripture says:

The whole creation groans and labors.

Romans 8:22 NKJV

Man would enter the world through the pain of childbirth and leave it by the agonies of death. While on this planet, life would be full of injustice, sweat and misery. God told Adam:

Because you ... ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.

Genesis 3:17-19 NIV

The thorns and thistles of life, whether real or symbolic, would make man's existence one of pain and struggling to survive. Man had set off a chain reaction of sorrow. But the most bitter consequence of man's sin was the very thing that God had warned them about. It was death.

4 DEATH

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Genesis 2:16-17 NKJV

In a very real sense, when Adam and Eve chose to defy God's warning, they tested God to see if he would keep his word. *Did God really mean what he said? Would man die? Or was God just talking, uttering empty threats—bombast without teeth?* Scripture's reply is quite emphatic:

It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law [or God's Word] to fail.

Luke 16:17 NASB

We don't like talking about death. It's a taboo subject. I have travelled all over the world visiting some of the most remote people groups on the planet and I have never found a society that enjoyed death. I have stood at many open graves, some in cities, some in jungles, but they all shared one common denominator: grief. It is burnt into the human psyche with the branding iron

of reality that death means one thing: separation. The loved one has slipped out of our presence never to return. The sense of loss and separation we feel brings us close to the meaning Scripture gives the word. In the Word of God, death implies some sort of *separation*. It does *not* mean annihilation or non-existence.

Death must not be disassociated from its origin—sin. Scripture speaks of it as a reward or payment for wrongdoing. Just as a person is paid wages for working, so...

...the wages of sin is death.

Romans 6:23 NKJV

Scripture speaks about death in a number of different ways. We will look at three:

1. Death to a Relationship (separation of man's spirit from God)

God had given Adam and Eve one rule to obey. While they obeyed it, they were safe and secure, but when they broke it, there were consequences. A perfect God could not allow mixed loyalties. Unless there was trust, no relationship could exist. Adam and Eve's choice to follow Satan's lies opened a vast gulf in the relationship between the LORD and man. The friendship was broken.

But the consequences went even further. The children of Adam and Eve and their children's children—indeed, all mankind to this day—have been born into this world separated from God.

The relationship between God and man is so thoroughly, so profoundly, so completely finished, that even though we live physically, God views all mankind as being...

...dead in your transgressions and sins.

Ephesians 2:1 NET

4-E
3:07

There's a dynamic here that we must not miss. Let me illustrate.

I have spent a significant portion of my life living in tropical countries. For a time, my wife and I had a house set on low stilts. On one occasion, a very large rat chose to crawl into the narrow space under our house and die. Unfortunately, the vermin expired right under our little bedroom. The carcass rotting in the hot, humid climate sent a stupefying odour into our bedroom, giving new meaning to the word *foul*. The rat smelled so rank that my wife and I found it impossible to sleep. We were forced to retreat to another part of the house.

The next morning my son Andrew volunteered to remedy the situation. He located a long stick and reaching deep into the crawl space under the house, slowly worked the dead rat towards the

opening. As it got close, Andrew pulled back in revulsion, grimaced and said, “Dad! The beast is full of maggots.” Oh gag! Andrew took a plastic bag, and sticking it over his hand, reached far under the house. Grabbing the miserable creature by its tail, he pulled the worm-infested cadaver out into the open. Holding the offending remains far from his body, he ran towards the jungle that bordered our property, and with a mighty swing, flung the rat far from his presence.

Now, if that rat had been able to read Andrew’s thoughts as he was flung far into the woods, he would have heard him say, “Get out of here!” And if the rat could have spoken and said, “For how long?” Andrew would have answered, “Forever!”

The dead rat illustrates two different ways God feels about sin:

- ❖ First, just as the rat drove my wife and me to sleep in another room, and just as Andrew flung that revolting carcass out of his presence, so God has separated himself from sinful man. Scripture says:

Your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you.

Isaiah 59:2 NKJV

Sometimes I’ve heard folks say that God seems far away. Well, Scripture does say that man is...

...alienated from God.

Colossians 1:21 NIV

Holiness demands the absence of sin. Remember how we said that the Word of God compares sin to something that has gone rotten? In the same way, sin is to the LORD what a rotten rat is to us. Just as sleeping in close proximity to that evil-smelling carcass was not normal for us, so it is not natural for a perfect God to allow sin in his presence. His...

...eyes are too pure to look on evil; [he] cannot tolerate wrong.

Habakkuk 1:13 NIV

Sin is like a drop of cyanide in a glass of pure water. It doesn’t take much, but it ruins it all. Since sin permeates the life of every human, God has separated himself from all mankind.

- ❖ This brings us to the second point that the dead rat illustrates. Just how long does the LORD feel we should be separated from him? The answer is pretty clear. Forever! Sin has infinite and eternal ramifications. Just like we would not want to live with the rotten rat next week or at any time, God will never allow sin to dwell in his presence.

This is difficult news, but keep reading. Good news is coming. For now though, it is important to understand that when Scripture speaks of man's relationship with God as being finished, it speaks with intensity. The friendship has been broken—the relationship is dead.

2. Death of the Body (separation of man's spirit from his body)

Physical death is not hard for us to grasp. But we need to understand something more as it relates to Adam and Eve.

4-F
0:58



When you cut a leafy branch off a tree, the leaves don't instantly wither and look dead. In the same way, when God told Adam *"for when you eat of it you will surely die,"* God did not mean that Adam would drop dead as soon as he ate the fruit. Rather, God meant that Adam would be cut off from his source of life and then, just like a branch, his body would eventually wear out and stop functioning. The body would ...

... die and return to dust.

Psalm 104:29 NET

Though the body dies, the spirit goes on living. The Word of God says the spirit is immortal.

3. Death to a Future Joy—The Second Death

(separation of man's spirit from God forever)

Scripture tells us that God is preparing a wonderful home for man after death. It's called Heaven. Heaven is an incredible place, designed by the LORD for man's future enjoyment. An eternal life full of joy is part of the plan. Just being free of sin, suffering and death will be wonderful.

But just as there is eternal life, so there is eternal death. When Scripture uses the word *death*, by implication it sometimes refers to the death of God's original plan for mankind. This death is also called the Second Death, probably because it occurs after physical death. This "Second Death" is reserved for those people who will not be living in the perfect world to come. Instead, Scripture says they will go to the Lake of Fire, an appalling place God created specifically for punishing Satan and his demons.

The lake of fire is the second death.

Revelation 20:14 NIV

Scripture speaks of being *thrown^a alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur* and of being *tormented^b day and night forever and ever*. It will be a place of *sorrow^c*, devoid of happiness.

^a Rev. 19:20 Though the physical body dies, the spirit continues to live.

^b Rev. 20:10

^c Psalm 116:3

The Scriptures talk of *worms*^d (literally *maggots*), of an intense *darkness*,^e of people *weeping and gnashing their teeth* in extreme anguish, of being parched with *thirst*,^f and of remembering this life and wishing for no one to join them. It's a place of lonely suffering, not some buddy-buddy celebration of debauchery.

^dMark 9:48
^eMatthew 8:12;
 22:13; 25:30
^fLuke 16:24

But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

Revelation 21:8 NLT

This is not good news at all. But keep reading. There is good news coming.

A SIN NATURE

Sin and death now reigned in Adam's bloodline, seemingly passed on through the generations by the father. Like begets like. Apples reproduce apples, cats reproduce cats, sinful man reproduces sinful man.

Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Romans 5:12 ESV

Because of Adam's sin, all his offspring would inherit his sin nature. And because he died, all his offspring would die.³

We often connect a list of crimes with the word *sinner*, but Scripture says it is more than that. Man has a *sin nature*, often called *Adam's nature*. This nature is a "condition" or "state of being." For example, the doctor has told a friend of mine that he has a heart condition. That condition reveals itself with symptoms. When he climbs the stairs, he huffs and puffs and his face changes colour. On occasion, he pops a nitroglycerin tablet under his tongue. In the same sense, we can say that every human has a condition called the sin nature. The symptoms of that condition are acts of sin.

AN HONEST GOD

If all this talk of sin and death seems morbid, it should be a reminder to us that God doesn't make unpleasant subjects pretty. He tells it like it is. Sin and death are two realities all humans have in common, and we need to know what Scripture says about them. To be told the truth is what one would expect from a perfect God.

ARE WE BORN WITH A PURE NATURE?

It has become popular to believe and teach that children are born into the world as perfect infants, free of all sin. But what do the Scriptures teach? Are we really born with a pure nature?

Not according to David, a prophet who wrote significant portions of Scripture:

For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

Psalms 51:5 NLT

Not according to a prophet named Job, whose book is found in God's Word:

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!

Job 14:4 NKJV

Not according to our own life experiences:

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?

James 4:1 NLT

We have to ask ourselves some tough questions. Did our parents have to teach us to lie and disobey, to be selfish and quarrelsome? No. Our human nature does not need to be taught how to sin. We do such things naturally.

Sin is like a contagious disease. Scripture says that Adam's sin nature (along with all its symptoms and consequences) has spread to us all.

The Wolof people of Senegal, West Africa, have several proverbs that illustrate this basic truth:

- ❖ An epidemic does not confine itself to the one who caused it.
- ❖ The leaping gazelle does not produce burrowing offspring.
- ❖ A rat doesn't beget that which doesn't dig.
- ❖ Even if a log soaks a long time in water, it will never become a crocodile.

Because Adam sinned, all his children have inherited his sin nature.

WHAT HAVE GENETICISTS FOUND?

"It makes us realize that all human beings, despite differences in external appearances, are really members of a single entity that's had a very recent origin in one place. There is a kind of biological brotherhood that's much more profound than we ever realized." So said Stephen Jay Gould, the Harvard paleontologist and essayist as far back as 1988 in a *Newsweek* cover article entitled, "The Search for Adam and Eve."⁴

According to the article, scientists *"trained in molecular biology ... looked at an international assortment of genes and picked up a trail of DNA that led them to a single woman from whom we all descended ... There weren't even telltale distinctions between races."*

Scripture says:

Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Genesis 3:20 NKJV

Then as early as 1995, *TIME*⁵ had a brief article saying there was scientific evidence that *"there was an ancestral 'Adam,' whose genetic material on the chromosome is common to every man now on earth."*

Scripture says:

From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth.

Acts 17:26 NLT

These studies of human DNA conclude that we all have one man and one woman in our ancestry. Some scientists agree; others disagree. Even those who agree are quick to point out that this may not be the biblical Adam and Eve. They may not have even lived together. Whatever the case, it's interesting to note that the findings are consistent with the Word of God.

This and other discoveries of modern molecular biology confirm what Scripture has indicated for millennia: we are all very closely related.

CHAPTER FIVE

1 A PARADOX

2 ATONEMENT

3 THE PROPHET ENOCH

4 THE PROPHET NOAH

5 BABEL

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/5.html



1 A PARADOX

In the first few chapters, we have learned a little about the character of the Most High. As we progress, we will learn more, but first, we need to stop and strengthen the foundation and fit together some more pieces of the biblical puzzle.

It is helpful to understand that just as God established physical laws to govern the universe, so he established spiritual laws that govern the relationship between the LORD and man. And just as a knowledge of physics and chemistry helps us make sense of the world around us, so a knowledge of these spiritual laws helps us make sense of life and death. These spiritual rules are not difficult to understand. To begin, we will look at man's situation.

MAN'S PROBLEM

Because of Adam and Eve's choice, mankind now faced a problem which has two facets, like opposite sides of the same coin.

- ❖ We have something we don't want: *a sin-debt*.
- ❖ We need something we don't have: *perfection*.



Let me explain in greater depth:

1. We have a sin-debt.

Centuries ago in the Middle East, when one incurred a debt, an official certificate was drafted so the parties involved would not forget the amount payable. Those who were unable to pay their debts were considered criminals under the full penalty of the law. In the same way, Scripture teaches that on God's moral ledger, our sin incurs a debt. There's a price to be paid. We are faced with a rule called ...

... the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2 ESV

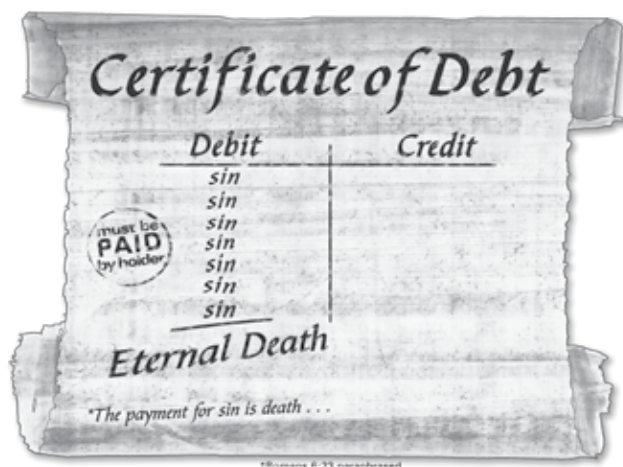
That law says:

The soul who sins shall die.

Ezekiel 18:20 NKJV

God warned Adam and Eve about this rule when he told them that if they disobeyed his word, they would die. This law states that the only way a sin-debt can be paid is by death—in all its three-part meaning.

The question then remains: Are we able to pay that debt? The answer is a qualified “yes.” We pay the consequences of sin when we experience things like guilt, shame, sorrow, loss and pain. But some people learn to cope quite well with such consequences. With time, they get over the guilt and pain. But it won’t be like that after death. The Second Death exists for time without end and it’s hard to call it paid, for the transaction is never completed—you go on and on paying for eternity. Frankly, most thinking people find themselves very reluctant to pay. The problem is this: we must pay. It’s our debt. Mankind is in a dilemma.



But even if somehow these horrifying consequences of sin were removed—if our sin-debt was in some way erased—we would still not be able to live with the LORD because we need something we don’t have.

2. We need perfection.

Since only perfect people can live with a perfect God in a perfect Heaven, we somehow need to attain to a level of goodness that makes us acceptable in God’s holy presence. Scripture says:

Without holiness no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14 NIV

This goodness, or righteousness, must be equal to the LORD’s righteousness. Since no one even comes close to that sort of perfection, we have a problem.

SUMMARY

So the question is twofold: How can we get rid of our sin-debt with all its consequences? And how can we gain a righteousness that is equal to God's righteousness, so we can be accepted in his presence?

Here is another way of putting it. We saw that mankind, by creation, was designed to live in God's presence. But when man disobeyed the LORD, his whole being changed. He lost that sinless nature which made him acceptable to God. So, how can man gain back that perfection which allows him to live with a perfect God? We will be keeping these questions in mind as we progress through the Scriptures.

Now that we have identified man's dilemma, let's turn our attention to the LORD and see how this affects him.

GOD'S SITUATION

To appreciate the LORD's situation, we need to understand two attributes that are part of his character:

1. Perfectly Just

We have seen that the LORD is the perfect One, entirely without sin. This means that God is honest and fair in the way he deals with his created beings.

He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!

Deuteronomy 32:4 NLT

We would say that the LORD is a good judge because he does not treat one person one way, and another person another way. Everyone is treated the same.

For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.

Deuteronomy 10:17 NASB

Whether dealing with prince or pauper, the LORD enforces his rules equally and fairly. Here on earth a person may hide a crime, lie about it, bribe the judge, or just simply not get caught. But with God, no offender will get away with his sin. No one will escape the LORD's justice.

For God will bring every work to judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 NKJV

Honesty and fairness are fundamental to God's perfect nature.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne.

Psalms 89:14 NASB

For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice.

Psalms 11:7 NIV

Because the LORD is perfect, we can count on him being absolutely fair. We like that. But here's the bad news: perfect justice demands that sin be punished with a penalty equal to the offense. It's indicative of just how seriously God views sin by the penalty assigned to it. As we have seen, Scripture says that our sin-debt can only be paid with our death—in all its three-part meaning. This is not good news. Fortunately, the other aspect of the LORD's character comes into the picture.

2. Perfectly Loving

God is not only absolutely just, he is also perfectly loving. By his very nature ...

... God is love.

1 John 4:8 NKJV

- ❖ We saw that the LORD revealed a type of love when he made the world. It is seen in the care and concern he has for what he created and how he ...

... richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment.

1 Timothy 6:17 NET

- ❖ In the pages to come, we are going to see the LORD unveil a deeper love—an undeserved type of love—often referred to using the words *grace* and *mercy*.

Give thanks to the God of gods, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Psalms 136:2-3 NASB

It was Adam and Eve who broke the friendship with God in the garden; God had not changed. The LORD still loved them.

He just didn't love their sin.

5-B
1:01

PARADOX

God's just and loving attributes create a paradox when you consider them in the light of mankind's sin-death dilemma. For example, to be completely just, God must enforce his rules when they are broken. There can be no exceptions. It means we all must pay our sin-debt; we must die. But because God is loving, he has no desire to destroy us. He wants us to live with him for eternity.

Both qualities of his character are equal; God is not more loving than he is just. Since the LORD always acts in a way that is consistent with his perfect nature, he has to be able to express both attributes equally.

The question is this, “*How can God maintain justice and still be loving?*” We will find the answer to that question as we continue to read.

SIN NEVER IGNORED

Knowing the LORD’s perspective on sin is key to correctly fitting together God’s message to mankind. Scripture says God has to do something about our sin-debt. He cannot ignore it and pretend it does not exist. To ignore sin would go against his nature—against his own holy character. So God does judge all sin, either here on the earth or after physical death. He is 100% consistent on that score. Without exception, we all must die.

*Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered,
so we must die.*

2 Samuel 14:14a NIV

But the verse does not stop there. We see the other attribute of the LORD’s nature coming into play. Because God is by nature loving...

*...he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain
estranged from him.*

2 Samuel 14:14b NIV

This verse is saying that although God allows our physical body to die, he also lovingly provides a way for our spirit to escape the eternal aspects of the death penalty. God makes it possible for us to live in his presence again. So how does the LORD judge sin and rescue us at the same time? How does God punish sin without punishing us? We will study that in the following chapters.

PRIDE

One last thing before we move on. Scripture says that pride is what caused Satan to rebel. We often look at pride as being a good thing, but the Bible says pride is what keeps us from coming to God for help. We are often too proud to humble ourselves and say that we need the LORD. Scripture warns us that...

...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1 Peter 5:5 ESV

Instead of being controlled by our own pride and worrying about what others think of us, the Bible says:

*Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom,
let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man
boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he
understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices
steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these
things I delight, declares the LORD.”*

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ESV

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1:04

2 ATONEMENT



After eating the fruit, the first thing Adam and Eve did was to clothe themselves in fig leaves. In spite of having these clothes, Adam told God that he felt naked—exposed. There is a reason for this. Scripture tells us:

God does not view things the way men do. People look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. ^{1Samuel 16:7}NET

God was looking right through their feeble attempts to clothe themselves. He could see their hearts.

Scripture tells us that God rejected Adam and Eve's attempts at self-improvement. The fig leaves covered their nakedness, but their hearts were full of sin. He wanted to teach them that man could do nothing, outwardly or inwardly, to remove the sin problem. So, he refused to accept their fig leaf clothes.

A COVERING

Only God could supply them with clothing that was acceptable to him. God took animals, killed them and ...

... the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Genesis 3:21 NASB

This was a graphic illustration of the fact that *sin brings death*. Adam and Eve had never seen death before. If they watched, it must have been a jarring experience—to see the blood spilled on the ground, the gasping for life, the shine pass from the animal's eye—to witness death's awful finality. Whatever the case, God made the awful reality of death understandable to them immediately. Animals died so that they might be clothed.

BANISHED

Although man had sinned, he still lived in the garden and had access to the tree of life. Eating of this tree would mean that man would live forever. So God removed man from the garden.

And the LORD God said, "Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not be allowed to stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."*

*Notice the word *us*. Since the Bible clearly states that there is only one God, it is logical to ask ourselves who God is talking to when he says, "... man has become like one of us." That question will be answered as we progress through the Scriptures.

So the LORD God expelled him from...Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken.

When he drove the man out, he placed on the eastern side of...Eden angelic sentries who used the flame of a whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life. *Genesis 3:22-24 NLT*

This was an act of mercy. God did not want men to live forever entrapped as sinners. Can you imagine what the world would be like if all the evil men and women down through the ages were still alive today? By putting man outside the garden, God allowed one of sin's consequences to take its eventual toll, namely physical death. But God was looking beyond the grave. He was thinking of his plan to deliver man from the Second Death, a way to escape the Lake of Fire.

CAIN AND ABEL (see time line, pages 158-159)

Now Adam slept with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When the time came, she gave birth to Cain, and she said, "With the LORD's help, I have brought forth a man!" Later she gave birth to a second son and named him Abel. *Genesis 4:1-2 NLT*

Both Cain and Abel were born outside the garden. Because they had been conceived as a result of Adam's union with Eve, they had Adam's sin condition and were separated from God. For God to be *just*, he must enforce his law. Cain and Abel also had to die for their sin. But God loved them, so in his mercy he provided a way for them to escape judgment. That way had two dimensions:

Inward—A Faith in God

Cain and Abel were simply to trust God and believe that what the LORD said was true. For example, God had promised Adam and Eve that the Deliverer would crush Satan's head and save them from sin's consequences. *Was that possible? Was it true? Did God really mean it?* Cain and Abel individually had to decide for themselves whether or not to believe God.

Outward—A Visual Aid

God also wanted to show them what it would take to remove sin. It involved a rather vivid visual aid.

A thorough study¹ of Scripture leads us to understand that God apparently gave Cain and Abel specific instructions of how to approach him. They were to take an animal, kill it and let its blood run out on an altar.* Why was this?

¹*Altars were stone or earthen platforms upon which sacrifices were made.

What conceivable reason would God have for such explicit instructions? Scripture says:

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22 NASB

Let's unpack that verse a bit using explanatory inserts.

Without [death through] the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [of the sin debt].

Hebrews 9:22 NASB

God was saying that man's sin-debt could only be paid, or forgiven, if there was death. But why the blood?

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Leviticus 17:11 NIV

This concept of a blood sacrifice has two aspects:

- ❖ **Substitution:** Normally, man would die for his own sin, but now, based on certain future events, God was saying he would accept an innocent animal's death in man's place—as a substitute. It was a life for a life, the innocent dying in place of the guilty. The sacrifice pictured the *law of sin and death* being obeyed in order to satisfy God's justice. But could not a sacrifice be killed without the shedding of blood, perhaps by strangling?
- ❖ **Atonement:** God said that the blood would make atonement for sin. The word *atonement* means "covering." The shed blood would *cover* man's sin, therefore when God looked at man, he would no longer see the sin. Man's relationship with God would be restored. Man would still die physically, but the eternal consequences would no longer apply (i.e. separation from God forever in the Lake of Fire).

ATONEMENT—A COVERING FOR SIN

Sacrificing an animal on an altar did not take away the sin. Man was still sinful. The sacrifice only pictured what was necessary for sin to be forgiven: death and shedding of blood. The blood provided an atonement or "covering" for sin. In effect, in the same way God covered Adam and Eve's nakedness with acceptable clothing, so man's sin was covered by the blood and man found acceptance with God. It would be right to say that the LORD temporarily overlooked man's sin as if it had been obliterated.

Through faith in God, as illustrated by the substitutionary death and the atoning blood on the altar, man would find forgiveness for sin and a new relationship with God.

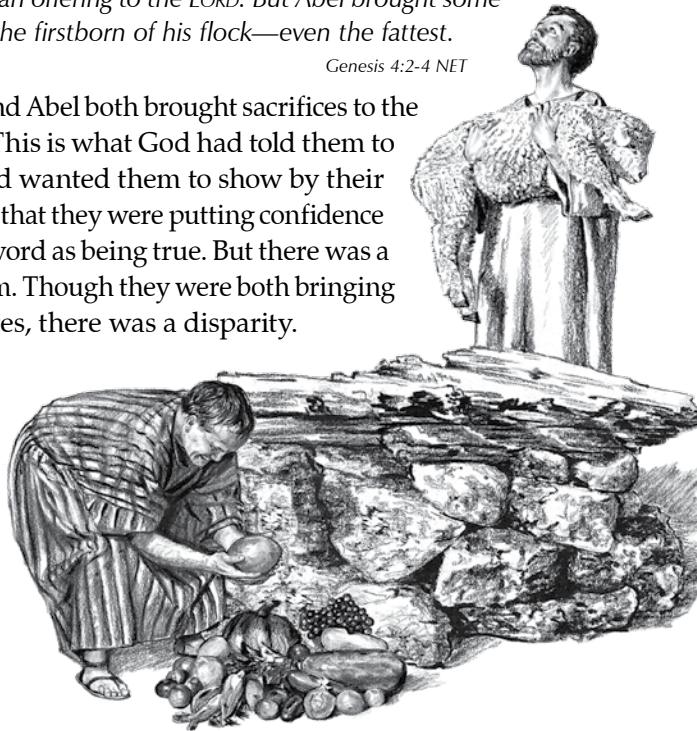
With God's instructions clear in our minds, we'll now return to the story of Cain and Abel.

TWO SACRIFICES

Abel took care of the flocks, while Cain cultivated the ground. At the designated time Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground for an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought some of the firstborn of his flock—even the fattest.

Genesis 4:2-4 NET

Cain and Abel both brought sacrifices to the LORD. This is what God had told them to do. God wanted them to show by their actions that they were putting confidence in his word as being true. But there was a problem. Though they were both bringing sacrifices, there was a disparity.



Abel brought an animal which could be killed and its blood shed. That was good—it was what God had said to do. But Cain brought garden produce. Vegetables do not shed blood. Cain was offering a sacrifice, but it was the wrong one.¹ He had come up with his own version of the fig leaves.

REJECTION

The LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering, but with Cain and his offering he was not pleased.

Genesis 4:4-5 NET

God rejected Cain's sacrifice. Cain erred in two ways.

5-F
2:07

First, his actions revealed that he really didn't trust God.

Secondly, Cain did things his own way. But God doesn't accept personal ideas about how to get right with him. Man may have the best intentions in the world, but sincerity is not enough—it does not restore the broken friendship between God and man.

Cain was “doing his own thing.” He joined Adam and Eve in ignoring God's instructions. He felt he knew better than God what was right.

ACCEPTANCE

On the other hand, Abel offered the kind of sacrifice that God had commanded—the shed blood of an innocent animal. Abel deserved to die for his own sin, but God in his mercy allowed the animal to die in his place as a substitute. As Abel placed his sacrifice before the LORD, he was trusting God to keep his word—to send a Deliverer to somehow save him from sin's awful penalty. It is doubtful if Abel knew how the Deliverer would accomplish his role, but it is clear that Abel was trusting God with the solution to sin.

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous. Hebrews 11:4 ESV

As Abel approached God in faith, his sacrifice provided an atonement-covering for sin. When God looked at Abel, he did not see his sin. In a sense, God overlooked it. In God's eyes, Abel could now be accepted in the LORD's presence.

GOD'S GENTLENESS

As for Cain, he wasn't happy with God.

Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.” Genesis 4:5-7 NIV

God gently tried to show Cain he was headed for trouble, that his sin nature would destroy him. He pointed out to Cain that he too would be accepted if he came the same way Abel had come. There is no record of Cain replying. He was sulking.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let's go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

Genesis 4:8-9 NET

Just like God quizzed Adam and Eve after they disobeyed, now we see the LORD questioning Cain. God didn't need to ask Cain what had happened. God knows everything; he knew exactly what had taken place. He was giving Cain a chance to acknowledge his sin. But as with Adam and Eve, Cain's words revealed his heart:

Cain: *"I don't know! Am I my brother's guardian?"*

God: *"What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!"* *Genesis 4:9-10 NET*

Sin cannot be hidden. Cain murdered his brother and then tried to deny it. God put his finger on Cain—"You did it!" There is no record of Cain ever expressing remorse for his actions. God could have destroyed him, but in his mercy, he moved him to another region. The human race had gotten off to a scandalous start.

SETH (see time line, pages 158-159)

And Adam had marital relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son. She named him Seth, saying, "God has given me another child in place of Abel because Cain killed him." And a son was also born to Seth, whom he named Enosh. At that time people began to worship the LORD. *Genesis 4:25-26 NET*

Though Seth was born with a sin nature, he trusted God just like Abel. It was through Seth and his descendants that God would send the Saviour. God was keeping his promise.

DEATH

Well, it's time to leave Adam. Scripture says he had a large family and lived to be extremely old. Some scholars have proposed that a greenhouse effect in the original creation could have shielded man from harmful cosmic rays allowing for the incredible lifespans recorded in early history. Others have noted that the accumulation of degenerative mutations would have been in its infancy, allowing for longer lifespans. Though there may be merit in these theories, increasingly, scientists believe that the length of one's life is the result of a genetically determined limit. Originally, that genetic limit could have been set much higher. We will see later what may have caused the change. Whatever the reason, the Bible says God's word finally came true for Adam.

After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

Genesis 5:4-5 NIV

WHOM DID SETH AND CAIN MARRY?

The Bible says Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters. It is implied that at this point in history, brothers and sisters would have married each other. Because there had not been enough time for a significant number of mutant genes to arise in the genetic pool shared by the children, no harmful effects would have resulted from this kind of intermarriage. Later in the history of the Bible, we see this type of marriage forbidden.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ABEL WHEN HE DIED?

Though Scripture does not explicitly mention where Abel's spirit went when he was murdered, we know from other Scriptures that those who died went to a place called Paradise, a place God prepared for believing men and women. Some scholars would differentiate between Paradise and Heaven during this time in history, but all agree they are now merged.

Scripture does not tell us a lot about Heaven, possibly because it's difficult to get our fogbound mortal brains to comprehend it. One prophet who was given a peek at the place was left wanting for concrete words; he resorted to word pictures to get his point across. When you consider the beautiful world God created for man in six days, it's rather staggering to contemplate what he is preparing for his people in Heaven. Scripture does say that Heaven is a real place, with real people living there. It will be like Eden, only incomparably better.

Man's sin nature will be gone.

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the ... book of life.

Revelation 21:27 NIV

Man will have a righteousness that is completely acceptable to God. In thinking of seeing the LORD, the prophet David wrote:

In righteousness I will see your face ... I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.

Psalms 17:15 NIV

Man's unique relationship with God will be restored.

Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Revelation 21:3 NIV

Everything about life will be perfect.

[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

Revelation 21:4-5 NIV

There will be no funerals or fractured relationships, no graves or broken-hearted goodbyes, no hospitals or homelessness, no crippled bodies or ailing health, no crutches or canes.

Instead, Heaven will be a place of endless joy and pleasure.

You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Psalms 16:11 NIV

Our bodies will not be limited by time or space. It seems we will be able to move about instantly. Evidently, we will also be able to recognize people we have known or heard about here on earth.

At least part of Heaven will be occupied by a large city. It has been calculated that if only 25% of the city was used, 20 billion people could be accommodated spaciouly. This city is called the New Jerusalem.

And he ... showed me the holy city, Jerusalem ... having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels.

Revelation 21:10-12 NASB

In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed.

Revelation 21:25 NASB

And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Revelation 21:21 NASB

Then [the angel] showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God.

Revelation 22:1 NASB

This will be a city like none we have ever known: no pollution, no rust, no decay, no thieves, no crime—perfect in every detail. All residents of Heaven will live there for eternity.

They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Revelation 22:5 ESV

I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

Psalms 23:6 NASB

Perhaps we can end this section with the following verse which, though not limited to heavenly realms, certainly carries the idea of what God has in store.

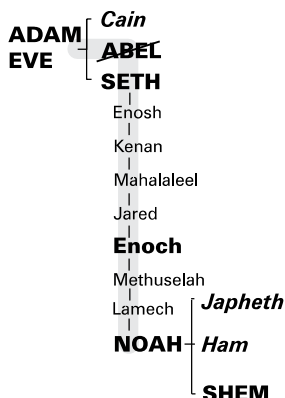
No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9 NLT

3 THE PROPHET ENOCH

Scripture has little to say about the immediate generations following the birth of Seth. One person who is mentioned briefly is Enoch. Enoch was a godly man who believed that only the LORD could save him from the consequences of sin. The Word of God says:

Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. Genesis 5:24 NASB



The Bible tells us that because of Enoch's faith, God took him directly into Heaven without dying. We find that happening only one other place in the Scriptures. Later on we will learn more about faith and why it is the essential ingredient for being accepted by God.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:5-6 NASB

That last sentence sums it up candidly. To come to God one must believe that he exists, and that he will make clear the way to friendship with him.

4 THE PROPHET NOAH

Many people think the Word of God is one constant sequence of stunning miracles. Actually, miracles were the exception. Centuries would pass before anything earthshaking would happen. At this point in our story, Scripture records that no less than ten generations passed before the next big event unfolded in world history. Each one of those generations represents a long lifespan during which time the population of the world increased dramatically.

Hundreds and hundreds of years passed, but God did not forget his commitment to send the Promised Deliverer. Each generation had those who believed God. Adam lived to be 930 years old, so for nearly a millennium, people could have learned about God and his ways directly from the original man and woman. Scripture says that God ...

...never left them without evidence of himself.

Acts 14:17 NLT

Unfortunately though, as the population of the world increased, the number who trusted God did not increase at the same rate. The Bible records that all but a few turned their backs on him.

VIOLENCE

Mankind had not only rejected God but was intent on following Satan with all the gusto man could muster. Scripture says:

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination [or intention] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.

Genesis 6:5,11-12 NIV

If you consider some of the nations of the world whose nightly news fills our television screens with accounts of anarchy, war, violence and rape, then you have an idea of what it must have been like. Scripture says that man's thoughts were consumed with evil continually. Perversion and chaos reigned. The world had become a deadly place in which to live.

In addition, the society of that day was focused on living for self.² Man had scorned God's plan and developed a philosophy of life that excluded any desire to seek after him. Though righteousness was far from man's mind, sin was a different matter.

For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies among themselves. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged the natural sexual relations for unnatural ones, and likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed in their passions for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

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0:30

*And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what should not be done. They are filled with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice. They are rife with envy, murder, strife, deceit, hostility. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, contrivers of all sorts of evil, disobedient to parents, senseless, covenant-breakers, heartless, ruthless. Although they fully know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but also approve of those who practice them.*³ *Romans 1:21–32 NET*

Scripture says that at this time in history, man had sold his soul to sin. But as we have seen before, sin has its consequences. It always does. Just as defying the law of gravity results in bruises and broken bones, so ignoring God's Word has ramifications. God could not condone the sin. The Word says God was grieved by it all.

So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." *Genesis 6:7 NKJV*

Man may have had a philosophy of life that excluded God, but God still held man accountable for his behaviour.

NOAH

But one man and his family were different. Scripture says:

Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

Genesis 6:8–9 ESV

Though Noah was a good-living man, the Word of God makes it plain that he still was a sinner. According to the *law of sin and death*, Noah had to die for that sin. But Scripture also indicates that Noah brought an animal sacrifice to God, evidence that he recognized the need to have an innocent substitute pay the death penalty for him. Noah believed the LORD would somehow save him from sin's consequences. Scripture says that because Noah trusted God, the LORD looked upon him as being righteous. Noah had a right relationship with the LORD, indicated by the words "*he walked with God.*"

So God said to Noah, "I have decided that all living creatures must die, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Now I am about to destroy them and the earth. Make for yourself an ark of cypress wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and out."

Genesis 6:13-14 NET

THE WAY OF ESCAPE

God told Noah to build an ark—a boat. This was no rowboat. It was a large ship, similar to modern ocean-going freighters. It had several decks, a built-in ventilation system and a door—only one door. The vessel was built of wood covered with a coat of tree pitch, a common means in past centuries of sealing a ship.⁴ The ark remained the largest vessel ever built until its size and ratio were almost duplicated in 1844 by the ship *Great Britain*. The dimensions of the ark are still considered ideal for a large stable boat. It was not built for speed, only to preserve life.

God told Noah:

I am about to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy from under the sky all the living creatures that have the breath of life in them. Everything that is on the earth will die, but I will confirm my covenant with you. You will enter the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.*

You must bring into the ark two of every kind of living creature from all flesh, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Of the birds after their kinds, and of the cattle after their kinds, and of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you so you can keep them alive. And you must take for yourself every kind of food that is eaten, and gather it together. It will be food for you and for them.

And Noah did all that God commanded him. *Genesis 6:17-22 NET*

OBEEDIENCE

Because Noah believed God, he obeyed him. That still didn't make God's directions any easier to follow. Noah had never built a boat before, certainly not one this size.

God said it would be 120 years before the flood would take place.⁵ During this time Noah not only oversaw the construction of the boat, he also warned all who would listen that judgment was coming.⁶

The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation."

Genesis 7:1 NIV

And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him. *Genesis 7:5 ESV*

On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark.

They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in. Genesis 7:13–16 NIV

ONE DOOR

The ark took seven days to load. With a few exceptions,* Noah only took into the ark one pair of each kind of animal. Even allowing for extinct kinds, the ship had adequate room to house them all, with the animals occupying only an estimated 60% of the vessel.⁷ The remaining space probably carried feed. Taking the young of animals may have been another space-saver. To save on food, some may have hibernated. Of course, God was quite able to sustain them in any way he chose.

* God told Noah to take into the ark seven pairs of all “clean animals” (good for sacrificial offerings). See Genesis 7:2,3 and 8:20.

After the loading was completed, God shut them in. When judgment came and the waters began to rise, no amount of banging on the ark could move Noah to open the hatch. Nor did Noah and his family need fear that the door might be torn open in the pounding deluge. They were perfectly safe because God had shut the door—the one and only door to safety. He had shut in those who believed and shut out those who did not believe.

God is gracious. He had given mankind 120 years to turn from their sinful ways and take advantage of his mercy. Now their time was up. Judgment came, just as God had said it would. Man sometimes threatens and never delivers, but God always keeps his Word.

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month—on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst open and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And the rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

Genesis 7:11-12 NET

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THE SPRINGS AND FLOODGATES

First of all, the earth ruptured, releasing massive amounts of underground water. Scripture talks about “the springs of the great deep bursting forth.” It has been theorized that water under extreme pressure was spewed high into the sky. Then it, along with water in the atmosphere, came down as “the floodgates of heaven were opened.”

The Hebrew word to describe this event means a “catastrophic deluge.” In Scripture, that word is solely used to describe this flood. No other inundation ever came close to equalling this one. Though many of the things that happened in the cataclysm can be explained by natural science, we must remember that an all-powerful God could create the flood circumstances and the attending catastrophic results without any limitation.

The rain lasted 40 days, but it seems from the text that water continued to flow out of the underground fountains for 150 days.

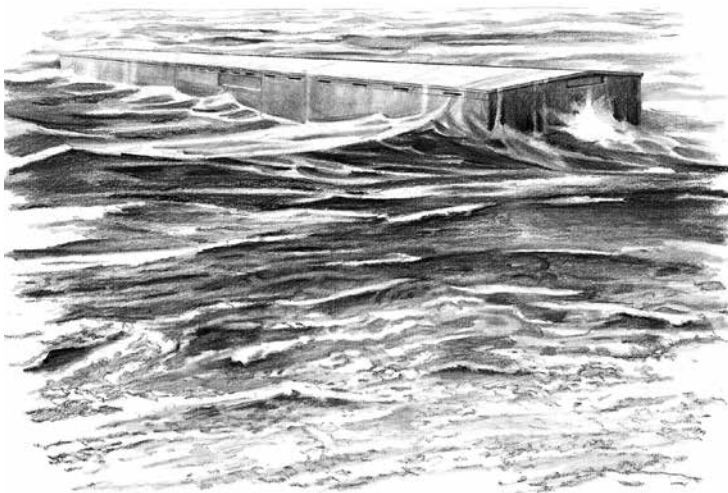
For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. Genesis 7:17-19 NIV

Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. So the LORD destroyed every living thing that was on the surface of the ground, including people, animals, creatures that creep along the ground, and birds of the sky. They were wiped off the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark survived.

Genesis 7:22-23 NET

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and domestic animals that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to blow over the earth and the waters receded. The fountains of the deep and the floodgates of heaven were closed, and the rain stopped falling from the sky. The waters kept receding steadily from the earth, so that they had gone down by the end of the 150 days.

Genesis 8:1-3 NET



It is believed that prior to the flood, the mountains were not as high as they are now. Today, if you were able to take the surface of the globe and smooth it out, the water would cover the earth to a depth of approximately two miles (3 km). Scripture says that after the flood, the mountains we see today rose up and the valleys sank down, presumably forming the ocean basins.

The waters were standing above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled... The mountains rose; the valleys sank down To the place which You established for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass over, So that they will not return to cover the earth.

Psalms 104:6-9 NASB

A DIFFERENT PLANET

Noah and his family were in the boat for 371 days before God opened the door and let them out. Long before that day, the waters had receded, and the ark had lodged in a mountainous region. When they left the ark, the ground was not only dry but producing again. It was a very different planet from before. It was the earth on which we now live.

Then God said to Noah, "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it."

So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.

Genesis 8:15-18,20 NIV

A PROMISE

The first thing Noah did after leaving the ark was to build an altar and offer innocent animals as blood sacrifices to God. These sacrifices did not remove the sin, but they did picture what was necessary to pay the penalty—blood shed in death. They were evidence that Noah had confidence in God, believing that the LORD would keep his word, and somehow save him and his family from the consequences of sin. God was pleased.

Then God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

Genesis 9:1 NET

"I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you... Never again will all life be cut off

by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you ... I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

Genesis 9:9,11-13 NIV

God promised to never destroy the earth with a flood again. Whenever it rained, the rainbow would be a reminder of that promise. Though thousands of years have passed since the flood, God has kept his word.

The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth ... These were the sons of Noah, and from them the whole earth was populated.

Genesis 9:18-19 NET

Man now had a fresh start.

Altogether, Noah lived 950 years, and then he died. Genesis 9:29 NIV

WHAT ABOUT DINOSAURS, FOSSILS, COAL AND OIL?

We do not find the word *dinosaur* in Scripture; the word is recent, invented in 1841 by an English anatomist. However, the early books of the Bible do record references to animals that have no present parallels. Two of the larger animals mentioned have an intriguing resemblance to the fossil record.⁸

From what the Word of God says, one can assume the dinosaurs were created by God and lived with man from the beginning. Dinosaurs appear to have been reptiles, most of which continue to grow throughout their lifetimes. If they had the long lifespan humans had before the flood,* it could account for the huge size some attained.

* Many people lived over 900 years.

The Word indicates that two of every kind of land animal was ordered into the ark. It makes sense that only the young were taken, not only to conserve space, but also to maximize breeding time in the post-flood years. Since the average size of a dinosaur was that of a small pony, and even the largest dinosaurs at birth were no bigger than a football, calculations show there was ample room for them on the ark.

As to what caused their demise, we can only conjecture. In the last few decades, many creatures have become extinct, but even in these recent cases, it's hard to nail down the exact cause. Going

back millennia makes it even harder. Since the climate seems to have changed radically after the flood, it has been theorized that it would have been difficult for such animals to survive.

The conditions created by the deluge answer many questions we see in the natural world. For example, the massive amount of sediment created by the flood, the extreme weight of the water, the tremendous amount of erosion—all could account for the deposits of coal, oil and fossils we now find. Many of the fossils show overwhelming evidence that they were swiftly and catastrophically buried, frequently in vast fossil graveyards. The very existence of any well-preserved fossil, such as a fish, means it was buried rapidly, with the encasing sediment hardening quickly before scavengers, bacteria and decay destroyed its features. The flood is also corroborated by the existence of marine life fossils that are found in all of the earth's major deserts and mountain ranges.

Many thought-provoking books have been written to discuss the creation-flood perspective. They present reasoned and logical explanations for much of what we see. If you have nagging questions, consult the Appendix for a list of resources that give you an analysis of these issues.

5 BABEL

5-K
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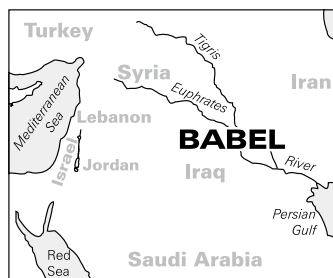
The tenth chapter of the book of Genesis is often called the Table of Nations. It tells us where the major ethnic groups came from, beginning with Noah's three sons. The chapter ends with this verse:

These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.

Genesis 10:32 NIV

Once again, centuries of time passed and the population of the earth increased. Our story now moves on to what historians call the cradle of civilization: ancient Mesopotamia, now modern-day Iraq.

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.



They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

Genesis 11:1-4 NIV

MAN'S AGENDA

After the flood, God had told man to ...

"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." *Genesis 9:1 NIV*

But now man was not only trying to change the agenda, but also had something to add of his own.

First: Man felt that everyone should stay in one place and build a big city. This was in direct disobedience to God's instruction. Once again, man felt he knew "better than God" what was right.

As you can see, man has a problem with obedience. Have you ever wondered why you don't need to teach little children to disobey Mom and Dad? It comes very naturally because defiance is natural to the human heart. Basically, as humans we don't want to be told what to do. We prefer to do our own thing. This was the problem with the people of Babel.

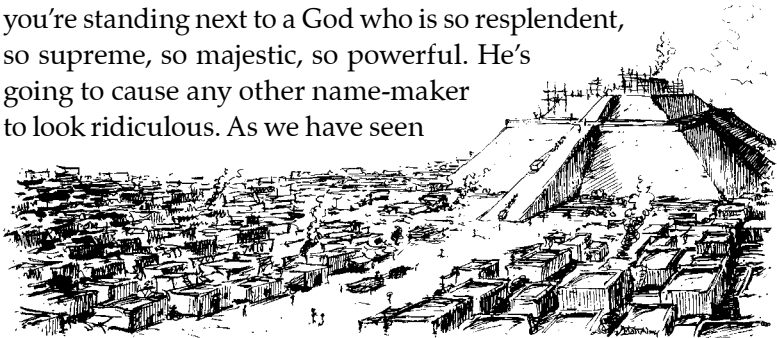
Second: Along with the city, man wanted to build a tower to bring honour to himself. The people were saying, "We want to ...

... make a name for ourselves."

Genesis 11:4 NET

You can't help but hear the evil whisperings of Satan. That had been his ambition too.

It is obvious that God was not a part of their plans. When man is busy trying to be a "somebody," to make a name for himself, then you can be sure pride is involved. God will have to be left out of the picture. It's preposterous to attempt to exalt yourself when you're standing next to a God who is so resplendent, so supreme, so majestic, so powerful. He's going to cause any other name-maker to look ridiculous. As we have seen



before, Scripture says that God is the only one worthy to have His name exalted.

So man's plans did not square with the LORD's instructions at all. Once again, man was functioning independent of the Most High God.

5-L
0:34



Babel is the first incident of an organized religion recorded in the Bible. Babel is often used in Scripture as an example of man's religious efforts. The people, in trying to build a tower to the heavens, were devising their own way of reaching God. You can imagine them, slaving away in the tropical heat as they collected mud, baked the bricks and glued them together with tar. It must have been dreadful toil, all so they could reach the heavens. But it didn't work. There is only one way to God—God's way.

A good definition for the word *religion* is this: "man's efforts to reach God." Man by nature tends to be very religious. He is constantly searching for or creating new ways to find God. It's a hopeless pursuit. Scripture says mankind is in a spiritual wilderness—he is LOST—and cannot find his way back to God on his own. Man can neither get rid of his sin nor find adequate righteousness to make himself acceptable to the LORD.

In contrast to religion, the Word of God teaches that the only true way to God was provided by the LORD himself when, in his mercy, he reached down to man and provided man with a way to escape the punishment for sin. It is God who rescues us. He's the Saviour. Scripture makes it clear that it is the LORD who...

...devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.

2 Samuel 14:14 NIV

The people of Babel ignored that fact. Of course, none of their impressive construction efforts escaped God's notice. God was fully aware of what was going on.

But the LORD came down⁹ to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."

Genesis 11:5-6 NIV

God knew what history has proven to be true, that with a common language man's progress in technology is much faster. It seems to be a pattern. The more advanced and comfortable things are, the less man feels he needs God. Though God had given man a free will, he did not want man to live independently of him.

SCATTERED

The story speaks for itself. God took action to confront man's defiance. God said:

"Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they won't be able to understand each other."*

So the LORD scattered them from there across the face of the entire earth, and they stopped building the city. *Genesis 11:7-8 NET*

*Once again, notice the word *us*. The Bible clearly states that there is only *one* God. So, who is the LORD talking to when he says "*us*"? We will study that later.

When God scattered them, he gave them new languages. He did a thorough job. Anyone who has ever embarked on the formidable task of learning another tongue knows you don't just create a new language on a whim. Some of the languages God created are so complex it can take trained linguists years to grasp, and even then, they do not completely understand them.

The city the people were building didn't disappear, but it did take on a name. It means *confusion*.

That is why its name was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the entire world, and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the entire earth.

Genesis 11:9 NET

CHAPTER SIX

- 1 THE PROPHET JOB**
- 2 THE PROPHET ABRAHAM**
- 3 GENUINE BELIEF**
- 4 HAGAR AND ISHMAEL**
- 5 ISHMAEL AND ISAAC**
- 6 THE PROVIDER**

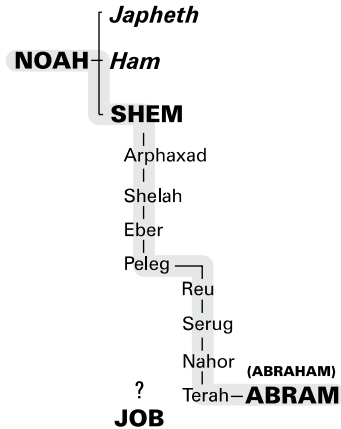
VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/6.html



1 THE PROPHET JOB

After the confusion of languages at Babel, many generations passed before Scripture records the next intervention by God in history. All through these passing years the LORD did not forget his promise to send a Deliverer. Though the majority of people lived with little thought of God, each generation records those who believed his promises. One such individual was a prophet named Job.



Job was a godly man who endured unimaginable emotional and physical suffering. To teach Job and mankind important lessons, God allowed Satan to strip Job of his possessions, his family and his health. However, even in the midst of such misery, Job knew that his worst problem was his sin problem—the sin condition with which he was born. In one conversation with God, Job told the LORD:

Even if I washed myself with soap and my hands with washing soda, you would plunge me into a slime pit so that even my clothes would detest me.

Job 9:30-31 NIV

Job knew that washing his body would not make him right with a holy, sinless God. Even if he scrubbed himself clean on the outside, on the inside Job was still a sinner deserving God's punishment. Job feared God's judgment on his sin. He wished there might be someone—a go-between—a mediator who could approach God on his behalf, and placing one hand on Job and another on God, plead for mercy.

If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove God's rod [of judgment] from me.

Job 9:33-34 NIV

Although Job regularly offered animal sacrifices as a death payment for his sin, Job seemed to understand that the animal sacrifice could not take away his sin-debt. It was only a temporary covering. Perhaps it was that knowledge, as well as Job's awe of God's greatness and uncompromising holiness, that prompted him to ask an all-important question:

"How can a man be righteous before God?"

Job 9:2 NKJV

Job wondered how he could get rid of his sin and gain a righteousness equal to God's righteousness so he could be accepted in God's holy presence. God's reply could probably be summarized like this: "Job, just trust me and I will take care of your sin problem. I will provide you with the righteousness needed to be in my holy presence. Trust me."

And Job did just that. He trusted God. He spoke of the Promised Deliverer coming to earth to somehow fulfill God's promise to Adam and Eve to save mankind from sin's terrible consequences. Job called the Deliverer his Redeemer. He said:

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

Job 19:25-27 NKJV

Job knew that when he died, he would see God. It was something he looked forward to because he trusted God and was in a right relationship with him. Later on, we will find out why Job called the Promised Deliverer his Redeemer.

2 THE PROPHET ABRAHAM

Around the same era as Job, there lived a couple by the name of Abram and Sarai.

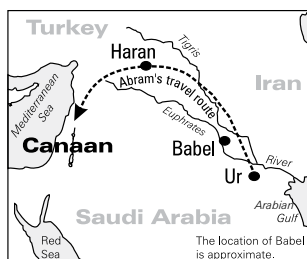
But Sarai was barren; she had no children.

Genesis 11:30 NET

Abram was born in the country we now know as Iraq. His hometown was the city of Ur, just south of Babel. Following the LORD's instructions, he left home and moved to Haran. It was here that God spoke to him a second time.

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country... and go to the land that I will show you ..." So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed him. Abram was seventy-five years old¹ when he left Haran.

Genesis 12:1,4 NLT



For Abram this was a big step, especially since he didn't even know where he was going! God had not told him. As he travelled, he would have to trust God to lead him one day at a time. His unknown destination was Canaan, which today is known as Palestine and Israel.

So they came to the land of Canaan. And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Genesis 12:5,7 NKJV

Because Abram believed God to be his Saviour from sin's consequences, he offered a blood sacrifice on an altar as an *atonement-covering* for his sin. Although the animal offerings were only a picture of what was needed for sin to be removed, Abram's sacrifice was clear evidence that he recognized the need to have a substitute pay the death penalty for him. He was trusting God just as Abel, Noah and all the other righteous people had done in ages past. Abram and Sarai led semi-nomadic lives, living in tents. The locals called them *hebrews*, a name which carried the connotation of a wanderer, the one from beyond. From this time on, their descendants were referred to as Hebrews.

FOUR PROMISES

God also gave Abram four specific promises:

- [1] *I will make you into a great nation...*²
- [2] *I will make your name great...*³
- [3] *I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse...*
- [4] *...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*

Genesis 12:2-3 NIV

When God **blesse**s, he bestows favour and well-being. When God **curs**es, he brings misfortune.

God's first promise was good news to Abram. In order to become a great nation, he would have to father children, but since he had no offspring and Sarai was past childbearing age, he was perplexed as to how this would happen. But God had promised, so it must be true.

The last promise hinged on the first and was a direct reference to the Promised Deliverer. God was telling Abram that one of his descendants would be the Saviour, through whom God would offer the world hope and deliverance from the sin problem. Scripture says Abram believed God and rejoiced at *"the thought of seeing"* the day of the Deliverer's arrival.⁴

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless...?"

[God] took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:1-2,5-6 NIV

This last sentence is loaded with meaning. We will look at three words that have far-reaching implications. They are the words *righteousness*, *credited* and *belief*. The last one is so important we will commit an entire section to it.

6-B
2:57

RIGHTEOUSNESS

We saw earlier that the word *righteousness* is used in reference to God's perfection, that he is flawless, holy, pure, clean, totally without blemish or sin. Such perfection is far beyond man's capability to achieve. It might be said that some people live good lives, but no one would be so bold as to claim they are perfect.

But that is just the point. To live in the presence of the LORD, one has to be just as righteous as God is righteous. Humanly speaking, that is impossible. But the Bible says Abram ended up with this sort of righteousness, not because he had it within himself, but because God *credited* it to him.

CREDITED

The word *credited* means "to count" or "to reckon" something as true. The Greek rendering of this verse uses a very strong word for "credited." It's a word that deals with a reality. If you are flat broke, but a friend tells you he has credited your bank account with \$100, you have \$100, no need to ask questions. It's a done deal. This is a word that refers to facts, not suppositions.

Scripture says the LORD credited righteousness to Abram. The source of the righteousness wasn't Abram, but the LORD. It wasn't that Abram all of sudden began to live a perfect life here on earth, but rather God looked upon Abram as if he was righteous, already standing in Heaven. It was a done deal. No need to ask questions. Abram had all he needed to live in the presence of the LORD.

The question at this point is, "Just how did Abram obtain this righteous standing before the LORD?" We find the answer in the third word we are going to look at:

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:6 NIV

Abram believed the LORD. He took God's Word at face value.

3 GENUINE BELIEF

This third word *belief* can be easily misunderstood. We need to understand some things about it as it appears in the Word of God:

- ❖ The words or concepts of *belief*, *faith*, *trust* and *confidence* are often used interchangeably.

Abram <i>believed</i> the LORD.	He <i>believed</i> what God said.
Abram put <i>faith</i> in the LORD.	He had <i>faith</i> in his Word.
Abram <i>trusted</i> the LORD.	He knew God to be <i>trustworthy</i> .
Abram had <i>confidence</i> in the LORD.	His <i>confidence</i> was in God alone.

- ❖ True belief is built on fact, not feelings. For example, before you sit in a chair, you give it a quick subconscious inspection. With a glance you observe certain facts: the chair is substantial, it looks solidly built and based on those facts, you rest yourself upon it, trusting it to hold you up. In the same way, Abram's faith rested on fact: God's promise. He wasn't following the LORD because he had some sort of nebulous, spiritual feeling. It was a matter of simple arithmetic:

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 & \text{God said, "You will have a son"} & \\
 + & \text{God is great; he can do anything.} & \\
 \hline
 = & \text{Abram will have a son} &
 \end{array}$$

- ❖ It's not the *amount* of faith⁵ you have, but *in whom* you are placing your trust. A lot of faith in a false god won't help you, but as we will see, even wavering faith in the LORD made the difference for Abram. It is the object of one's faith that is important, not the amount of faith one may have.
- ❖ True biblical belief does not stop with mental assent to the facts. If it did, it would not be faith.

Faith can be illustrated the following way: Two friends are walking along a path and come to a swinging bridge. One asks the other, "Do you believe that bridge is safe?" The other replies, "Of course I do!" Then the first friend says, "Okay, let's cross it!" If the second friend is reluctant and begins making excuses for not crossing it, it's doubtful that he really believes. With his mouth he professes faith in the bridge, but his actions show that he doubts it in his heart. The point is this: our belief affects our actions.

Abram's belief went beyond mere mental agreement. He staked his life, his reputation and his actions on God's promises. Because he believed, he was obedient to God and travelled to a foreign land. Because he believed he offered sacrifices, trusting God to save him from sin's consequences.

At the same time, it's important to understand that Abram's obedience wasn't an attempt to prove to God or to others the genuineness of his faith. Rather, because he trusted God, the natural result was that he did the things God wanted him to do.

Earlier on, we asked that two-sides-of-the-same-coin question: "How can we get rid of our sin-debt and gain a righteousness equal to God's righteousness, so we can be accepted in his presence?" The biblical solution to the second part of that question is simple: trust the LORD, believe his promises, and God will provide the righteousness.

The Bible says Abram had such confidence that God would keep his word, that he ...

... was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Hebrews 11:10 NASB

Abram was looking forward to Heaven. Although Abram's body would eventually die, he knew that God had given him the righteousness he needed to live forever with the LORD.

But we still face a question: "How could Abram live in Heaven if his sin-debt had not been paid?" That was the other side to the same-coin problem. Getting rid of the sin-debt and needing righteousness were not issues that could be separated. Sin's consequences were still something to be reckoned with. How was the debt to be paid if Abram was in Heaven?

Well, the truth of the matter is that God had plans to take care of the sin-debt. All Abram had to do was trust the LORD to keep his word. He is the Saviour.

4 HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

As the years passed and Abram and Sarai still didn't have children, they decided to take things into their own hands. In accordance with the culturally accepted method of dealing with childlessness, Sarai took her slave girl, Hagar, and gave her to Abram. He had a child by her—a boy they named Ishmael. Abram had a real live

descendant now—one who could fulfill God’s promise. However, there was a problem. They had done things their way, not God’s way.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless . . . No longer will you be called Abram, your name will be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.”

Genesis 17:1,5 NIV

Abram, now Abraham, had no problem with what God was saying. After all, he had a descendant. Hagar had given him a son—Ishmael!

God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

Genesis 17:15-16 NIV

This wasn’t such good news. Why was God mentioning Sarah at all? Abraham already had a son! Could not the Promised Deliverer come through Ishmael? Why was it necessary for the Deliverer to descend through Sarah? She was so old. It was impossible!

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?”

And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”

Genesis 17:17-18 NIV

Abraham pointed out to God that Ishmael was a candidate.

Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him . . . and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.”

Genesis 17:19-21 NIV

So there it was. God would only honour that which was done His way. Sarah was to have the promised child in one year’s time, and God had given the child a name, Isaac. God had not forgotten Ishmael either. We will read more about him later in this chapter.

THREE VISITORS

So Abraham and Sarah waited. In the meantime God came again to speak with them, this time in the form of a man. He was accompanied by two angels who also appeared as humans.

The LORD: *“Where is Sarah your wife?”*

Abraham: *“There, in the tent.”*

The LORD: *“I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.”*

And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old... Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

The LORD (to Abraham): *“Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’ Is anything too difficult for the LORD? ... I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”*

Sarah: *...denied it however, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid.*

The LORD: *“No, but you did laugh.”*

Genesis 18:9-15 NASB

It must have been a revelation to Sarah to know that her thoughts were being read by an all-knowing God. She tried to deny that she had laughed. Denial doesn't work with God. He said, “Yes, you did laugh!” God holds each person responsible for his own actions.

Abraham and Sarah believed that God would keep his promise, but as we can see, their faith went through ups and downs. At times they struggled with doubt, but a wonderful thing about God is this: he has promised to honour faith the size of a mustard seed.⁵ Mustard seeds are very small. As we have seen before, what counts is not the *amount* of faith you have, but *in whom* you are placing your faith. Abraham and Sarah were trusting God.

5 ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.

Genesis 21:1-3 NIV

God kept his promise to Abraham and Sarah, even in their old age. He always keeps his word and delights in doing the impossible. Abraham now had two sons—Isaac by Sarah and Ishmael by Hagar. Though this old man would have other children, these two are the ones we know the most about.

When Ishmael was about 16 years old, and Isaac was only two, an event happened that changed both Ishmael's life—and world history.

Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking.

Genesis 21:9 NASB

Ishmael was making fun of Isaac. Ishmael, at 16 years of age, did not understand God's plan to make Isaac the father of a great nation, which would channel into the world the prophets, the Scriptures and ultimately the Deliverer himself. As for Sarah, she did not appreciate Ishmael poking fun at her son.

Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac."

The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.

Genesis 21:10-11 NASB

Although God had said the Promised Deliverer would come through Isaac, Ishmael was still Abraham's son. There was an obvious father's love for his boy. Abraham was caught between his wife's protective jealousy and his own affection.

But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant."

Genesis 21:12-13 NASB

In a sense, God told Abraham to let Hagar have her freedom.

So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes.

Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept.

Genesis 21:14-16 NASB

You can imagine Hagar's despair. From her perspective, she was doing her best to care for her son without help or home in the world. In the midst of her sobs, she had forgotten that God cared for her and Ishmael.

God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar?

Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him."

Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink.

God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer.

Genesis 21:17-20 NASB

Scripture says that God was with Ishmael as he grew into manhood. Although it was through Isaac that the LORD would send the Deliverer, God also wanted to bless Ishmael. The LORD wishes to be the God of all people. Every individual has access to the LORD if they approach him in God's way.

Just as God promised, Ishmael did indeed become a great nation. Many Arab nations today directly trace their lineage back to this man.

He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Genesis 21:21 NASB

6 THE PROVIDER

After Ishmael's departure, the biblical narrative now turns to an event in Abraham's life never to be forgotten.

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Genesis 22:1-18 NIV

This is a most profound story. At first glance, it may seem that God is endorsing child sacrifice! But look deeper.

6-C
2:12

TAKE YOUR SON

The setting is simple. God asked Abraham to take his son and sacrifice him on an altar—to put him to death. This is no idle request. When the Word of God refers to this son as being Abraham's only son, it does not mean that Abraham had no other offspring. Instead, the LORD was focusing Abraham on the one son from whom the Deliverer would descend. For years he had waited for this child, and Isaac was the very son that God had promised would not only be the father of countless descendants, but the one from whom the Promised Deliverer would come.

The LORD had been very specific and it was obvious a dead son could have no offspring!

God's request must have bewildered Abraham. In all probability he had witnessed the human sacrifices practiced by other nations of his day and knew it was a common form of appeasing their gods. Yet God's command to sacrifice his son went against everything Abraham knew about the Creator. God, in his love, had promised Isaac as a descendant who would bear many children. There was no earthly way to harmonize God's previous promise with his present command. And yet Abraham had learned that the LORD was utterly trustworthy, so he did just as God requested. Calling his son, he saddled the family donkey and taking what he would need to carry out the sacrifice, he set off to do the LORD's bidding. His heart must have been torn with anguish! Being obedient was a painful step for Abraham, but that step showed his absolute faith in God's goodness.

Scripture does not leave us guessing Abraham's thoughts. It tells us that Abraham clung to God's promise, convinced that even if he sacrificed Isaac, the LORD would raise him from the dead.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Hebrews 11:17,19 ESV

Scripture says that God was testing Abraham's faith. We'll understand the reason why in a few more pages.

Abraham and Isaac, along with two servants, headed off to the mountains of Moriah. When they got nearer, Abraham and his son went on alone. Abraham carried the knife and the fire; his son carried the wood. Somewhere along the way, the boy queried his father. No doubt, the lad had witnessed many sacrifices and it didn't take a college degree for him to realize that one of the essentials was missing—the sacrifice itself. Where was the lamb?

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Genesis 22:7 NIV

One can't help but wonder if Isaac was thinking about the prevalence of child sacrifice in neighbouring religions. He too was trusting in the LORD and in no small way! When his father replied that God Himself would provide the lamb, Isaac went on willingly. It says they went together.

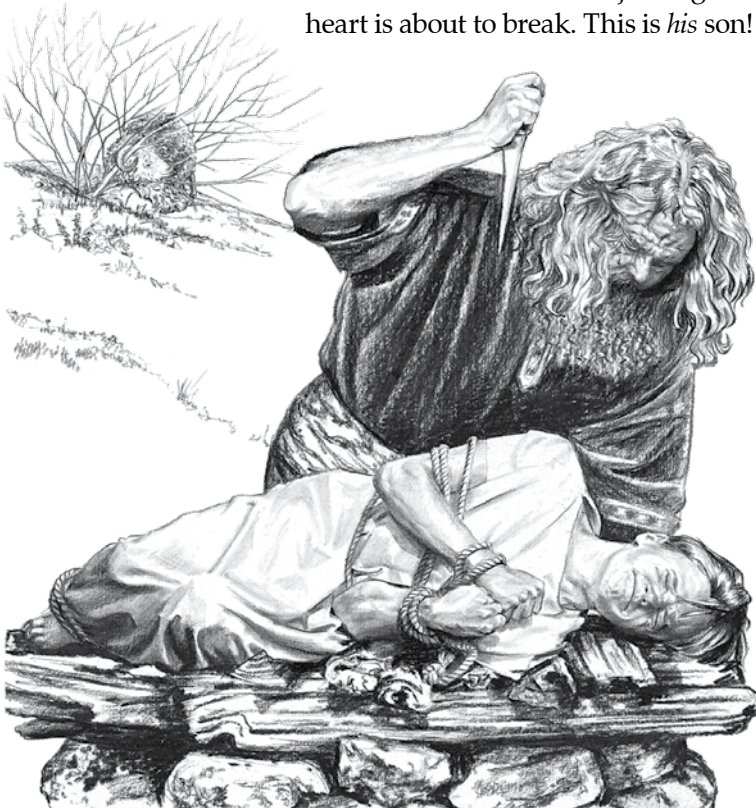
God showed them the exact place to erect the altar on one of the mountains of Moriah. Many years later, the Jewish Temple and then the Dome of the Rock would be built on Mount Moriah.

BOUND

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Genesis 22:9 NIV

Abraham's son was no infant. The Hebrew word translated *boy* was used of young males all the way up to military age. He was certainly old enough to put up a fight and, in spite of the fact that Abraham was elderly, there is no record of a struggle. It is obvious the son willingly submitted to his father, an act which showed implicit confidence in his dad whom he knew to be a follower of God's Word.

Once bound on the altar, Isaac was helpless. He was under direct and specific orders from God to be slain. There was no way he could save himself. Scripture says Abraham stretched out his arm and took the knife. You can see the old man's hand shake. His jaw sags. His heart is about to break. This is *his* son!



The strain of the moment is incredible. Slowly, the trembling arm is raised and in the sober light of day, the cold metal of the knife glints. Deliberately, Abraham commits himself to carry out the act, and then...and then God intervenes. The angel of the LORD calls to Abraham from Heaven:

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Genesis 22:12 NIV

There must have been tears. You can see Dad and son weeping in overwhelming relief. God had intervened. The sentence of death was gone—at least for the son it was gone. But there was still a death.

6-D
1:13

A SUBSTITUTE

Scripture says that God provided an animal.

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns.

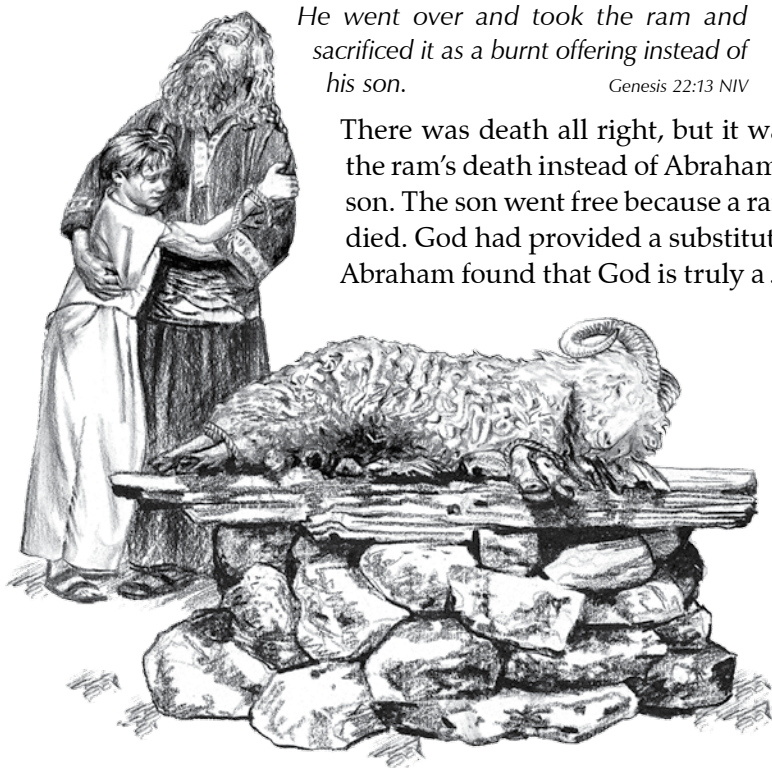
Genesis 22:13 NIV

Entangled in this way, the sheep could not injure itself in an effort to be freed.

He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Genesis 22:14 NIV

There was death all right, but it was the ram's death instead of Abraham's son. The son went free because a ram died. God had provided a substitute. Abraham found that God is truly a...



... Savior in time of distress ...

Jeremiah 14:8 NASB

So Abraham called that place *The LORD Will Provide*. And to this day it is said, "*On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.*"

Genesis 22:14 NIV

Notice how Abraham named the mountain, "*The LORD Will Provide.*" We just saw that God provided a substitute sacrifice. Why did he not name the mountain, "*The LORD Has Provided*"? This question will be answered in a later chapter.

A LESSON FOR ALL

The story ends with God reaffirming his promise to Abraham. Through Isaac his offspring would be a great multitude—the whole nation of Israel. Included in God's promise was the fact that the Deliverer would be one of the descendants of Abraham and Isaac. It was said that he would be a blessing to all people.

"I swear by myself," declares the LORD... "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Genesis 22:16,18 NIV

God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son was something that God would never again ask of another human being. God wanted to communicate certain truths not only to Abraham, but also to us—truths having to do with judgment, faith and deliverance through a substitute.

Just as Isaac was under God's direct order to die, so all mankind is under the sentence of death.⁶ Firmly bound on the altar, Isaac could not save himself. As for Abraham, he trusted the LORD, believing that somehow his loving God would resolve the dilemma. And that is exactly what God did. He provided a way of escape through a substitute. It was a life for a life—the innocent dying for the guilty.

Just as Abel had sacrificed a lamb to die in his place, so the ram had died in the place of Abraham's son. And just as God had viewed Abel's sacrifice as acceptable, so God saw fit to provide a ram as an acceptable sacrifice in the place of Isaac. It was God's idea. It was man coming to God in God's way, believing that his Word was true.



CHAPTER SEVEN

1 JACOB AND JUDAH

2 THE PROPHET MOSES

3 PHARAOH AND THE PASSOVER

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/7.html



1 JACOB AND JUDAH

Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people. Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah ... there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.

Genesis 25:8-10 NASB

With Abraham gone, what would happen now? Just as God had said, Ishmael's offspring became a family of great nations. God also renewed his promise with Isaac, telling him that he would be the father of the nation through whom the Deliverer would come. Both Ishmael and Isaac lived long lives and died.

JACOB

Isaac had two sons: Esau and Jacob. Esau was like Cain, patterning his life around his own ideas, doing his own thing. On the other hand, Jacob trusted God and therefore, the LORD considered him righteous. Jacob often came to God offering blood sacrifices on an altar.

So Jacob ... built an altar there ... because there God appeared to him.

Genesis 35:6-7 NKJV

Jacob believed the principles found in God's Word, that ...

... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22 NET

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

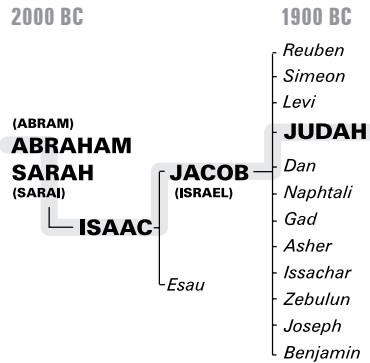
Leviticus 17:11 NIV

Although Jacob often failed in life, God was the ultimate focus of his trust. Later his name was changed to Israel which means *God prevails*. God also renewed his promise with Jacob, the same promise he had made to Abraham and Isaac. The LORD told Jacob:

"I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac ... in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Genesis 28:13-14 NASB

God was saying that one of Jacob's descendants would be a blessing to every nation—a reference to the Promised Deliverer.



Jacob (or Israel) had 12 sons from whom descended 12 tribes.¹ Before Jacob died, he prophesied that it would be through the tribe of his son Judah that the Deliverer would come.

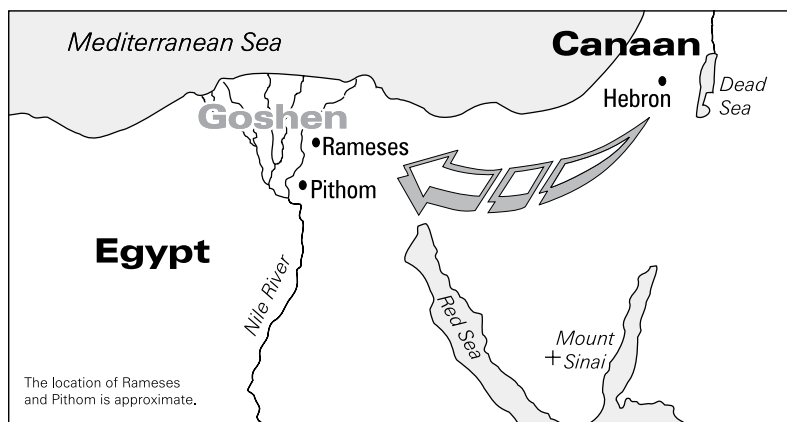
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Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived semi-nomadic lives in Canaan. In the final years of Jacob's life, famine hit the country and he, along with his sons and their families, moved into Egypt. At the time, this ragtag band numbered only 70 souls. Egypt received and treated them well. Another of Jacob's 12 sons—Joseph—had been taken to Egypt as a slave years before and, through wise usage of his talents under the direction of God, he had become an indispensable lieutenant to the Egyptian pharaoh. Because of this, Pharaoh was favourably disposed toward Joseph's family and gave them land in the rich Nile Delta in an area called Goshen. They settled there to wait out the famine.

Three hundred and fifty years later, they were still in Egypt, but by then it is estimated that there were 2.5 million Israelites. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had indeed become a great nation, but they were in the wrong country. They had been promised the land of Canaan, not Goshen in Egypt. However, God had not forgotten his promise. He had told Jacob long before the 70 had fled the famine in Canaan:

"I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Genesis 28:15 NASB



2 THE PROPHET MOSES

Two and a half million Israelites in Egypt could hardly be ignored. The Egyptian king (or pharaoh) came up with an idea.

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0:47

And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.

But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field.

Exodus 1:9-14 ESV

In spite of the terrible situation, God had not forgotten his promises. Scripture says:

God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.

Exodus 2:24-25 NASB

God had plans to deliver the children of Abraham from their slavery. God's man was in place—an Israelite named Moses. Moses had been born in Egypt to parents who had descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (or Israel). At birth, Moses was condemned to die. Providentially, he was rescued and raised as a member of Pharaoh's household with access to the best education in the land. As an adult, Moses murdered an Egyptian in defense of an Israelite, and then fled for his life into the desert. It was there that he became a shepherd, and for the next 40 years learned to lead sheep. It was an education designed by God.

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Now Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to the mountain of God, to Horeb.

The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from within a bush. He looked—and the bush was ablaze with fire, but it was not being consumed!

So Moses thought, "I will turn aside to see this amazing sight. Why does the bush not burn up?"

When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him from within the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

God said, “Do not approach any closer! Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground... I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

Exodus 3:1-6 NET

Moses' blood must have chilled. He knew about the eternal Most High God. He knew that God was the Creator-Owner of all living. He knew the LORD was a holy God who separated himself from mankind because of their sin. Moses himself was a sinner—a murderer.

Then Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt. I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

So now go, and I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

Exodus 3:6-7,10 NET

Moses must have sighed with relief. God was not coming to judge his sin, but to give him a job. But there was a problem. Moses was a shepherd and the task looked formidable. Who was he anyway? People wouldn't put much confidence in a fellow who said he spoke to a bramble bush.

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

Exodus 3:13 ESV

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Exodus 3:14 NIV

I AM means the “self-existent one,” the God who exists by his own power.

“This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: “I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into... a land flowing with milk and honey.”’

“The elders of Israel will listen to you.”

Exodus 3:15-18 NIV

Though Moses struggled with misgivings, he also knew that when God made a promise, he always kept his word. So Moses packed his bags and headed back to Egypt, back to Pharaoh and the Israelite slaves. On the way, he met his brother Aaron whom God had sent to be his spokesman.

And Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses... So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshipped.

Exodus 4:29-31 NASB

It happened just the way God said it would. The people believed and worshipped the Lord. God was keeping his promise.

3 PHARAOH AND THE PASSOVER

It was one thing for Moses and Aaron to convince the leaders of Israel that God had spoken, but quite another to persuade Pharaoh on the whole idea.

Afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go...'" But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."

Exodus 5:1-2 NASB

Well, Pharaoh was right on one count—he did not know the LORD. Egypt venerated a multitude of gods—the sun god, the god of storms, the Nile River—even Pharaoh was a god. Each god was represented by a different symbol: the vulture, the frog, the scorpion and so on. The ancient Egyptians worshipped the creation rather than the Creator. Not only was Pharaoh ignorant of the one true God, he was closed to the whole idea of becoming acquainted. For him to worship the Creator and submit to his will would mean a considerable loss of power and status. Letting the Israelites go would be hard on the economy—a major loss of free labour. Pharaoh was adamantly opposed to such an idea.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh... I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them... with mighty acts of judgment."

Exodus 6:1,6 NIV

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God told his prophet Moses that he would bring judgment on Egypt in the form of plagues. Only under these conditions would Pharaoh let the Israelites go. Such news was rather disconcerting. If God brought plagues on Egypt, what would Pharaoh do in retaliation? The LORD encouraged the Israelites by reminding them of his promise to their forefathers.

"I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God... I will bring you to the land I swore [or pledged] to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD."

Exodus 6:7-8 ESV

GOD'S PEOPLE

God said the Israelites would be his people. This did not mean that *only* the people of Israel could follow the true God, but it did mean the LORD was making it easier for the different nations of the earth to know just what God was like. All the world would need to do is look at one nation and they would see how God dealt with mankind! We will see later how well Israel fulfilled this assigned role.

God said he would bring plagues on Egypt in order to deliver Israel. In the process, he would teach both nations something about himself.

Israelites—the lesson to be learned:

"You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

Exodus 6:7 NASB

Egyptians—the lesson to be learned:

"The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it."

Exodus 7:5 NIV

God was going to teach both nations the same thing—that he alone is God. However, Pharaoh would have nothing to do with Moses and Aaron. So God told them:

"Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him... And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go... But so far, you have not obeyed."

Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD... I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile."'"

Exodus 7:15-18 ESV

And that's exactly what happened. God struck right at the heart of the ancient Egyptian religion by making one of their gods, the Nile, turn to blood. He made the river abhorrent to them! But ...

... Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses ... and did not take even this to heart. Exodus 7:22-23 NIV

GOD VERSUS GODS

And so a cycle began. God would warn Pharaoh to let the Israelites go; Pharaoh would say "No!" and God would bring a plague, each one targeting another of the Egyptian gods.

First, the Nile was turned to *blood*.

Then God sent a scourge of *frogs*, in every nook and cranny. In food, in beds—everywhere.

This was followed by swarms of aggressive *gnats*.²

Flies supplanted the gnats.

Then an epidemic struck the *cattle*; they all died.

After that, the people were tormented with festering *boils*.

Then massive *hail* ravaged their crops.

What the hail left behind was devoured by a horde of *locusts*.

Finally, the true God struck at the false god, the sun, with a curse of *darkness* so thick it could be felt.

In all, God sent ten plagues—the last and most devastating one was yet to come. God spoke to Moses and Aaron:

And the LORD said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether."

"Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals.'"

Exodus 11:1,4-5 NKJV

The last plague was indeed the worst, falling on Egyptians and Israelites alike if they did not follow God's instructions. The LORD God, as a just God, was bringing judgment on sin, but as a God of love, he was also mercifully providing a way of escape. It did not matter whether one was an Egyptian or an Israelite, when it came to God's justice or love, they stood equal in his presence.

7-E
3:01

Though both *could* experience God's love, both *would* experience God's judgment if they did not listen. God said:

Take a lamb.

"On the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household."

Exodus 12:3 NIV

It must be a male, without blemish. It couldn't be deformed or defective in any way. God was asking for a perfect lamb.

"This animal you select must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no defects."

Exodus 12:5 NLT

Kill the lamb at the appointed time.

"Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight."

Exodus 12:6 NIV

Apply the blood to the doorposts and the lintel.

"Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs."

Exodus 12:7 NIV



Stay inside the house until morning.

"None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning."

Exodus 12:22 ESV

Do not break any of the lamb's bones.

"It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones."

Exodus 12:46 NIV

If man followed God's instructions, then the LORD said, "I will pass over."

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD."

*The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, **I will pass over you**. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt."*

Exodus 12:12-13 NIV

When God came in judgment to kill the firstborn, he would pass over every house where the blood was applied—whether Israelite or Egyptian. The blood on the doors was outward evidence that the inhabitants of that house trusted God, believing what he said was true.

CONSIDER

You can imagine what would have happened if a fellow had reasoned to himself, *"This is ridiculous, killing the best lamb. I have an old cripple; it will do."*

Or, if one called to his friends, *"Hey guys, it's a beautiful night. Let's have our party outside."*

Would God have withheld judgment and simply passed over? Obviously not. They may have done it with the best of intentions, but they would not be following God's instructions. They would be "doing their own thing"—just like Cain and the people of Noah's day. The LORD would judge them along with the Egyptians because they refused to trust him. They would be getting just what they deserved.

On the other hand, what if an Egyptian happened by and heard that God was going to send a final plague? And that Egyptian got to thinking: *"You know, our gods are false. The Israelites worship the one true God. I want that God to be my God. What does the LORD require of me?"* And then—in spite of any fear about what his

neighbours might say—he put his faith solely in God and followed the instructions for the Passover. Would God “pass over” his house that night? Would he escape punishment? Yes, he would, because he believed the LORD and was coming to God in God’s way. His faith would be honoured by God who would extend to him grace and mercy.

It happened at midnight—the Lord attacked all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the prison, and all the firstborn of the cattle.

Pharaoh got up in the night, along with all his servants and all Egypt, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no house in which there was not someone dead.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron in the night and said, “Get up, get out from among my people, both you and the Israelites! Go, serve the Lord as you have requested! Also, take your flocks and your herds, just as you have requested, and leave. But bless me also.”

So all the Israelites did exactly as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron. And on this very day the Lord brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

Exodus 12:29–32,50-51 NET

GOD KEEPS HIS WORD

God had been gracious with Pharaoh by giving him a clear message through the prophet Moses. He had given him many chances to free the Israelites, but when Pharaoh continued to refuse, God judged the Egyptians just as he said he would do. God is not like us. We may threaten to discipline our children and then fail to follow through, but God always keeps his word.

On the other hand, the Israelites experienced the LORD’s kindness because they believed him. When he came in judgment, wherever he saw the blood applied, he passed over. The firstborn lived—but only because a lamb died. It had been this way from the very beginning. God had accepted Abel’s sacrifice as a death payment in Abel’s place. When Abraham offered his son as a sacrifice, the ram died in the boy’s place. Now with the Passover, the lamb died in the place of the firstborn.

These substitutionary sacrifices were visible statements of each person’s trust in God as their Saviour. Because they believed the LORD, they obeyed him.

This feast was to become a tradition for the Israelites. Every year they were to eat the Passover as a reminder that God had delivered them from slavery.

“This is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the LORD. This is a law for all time.”

Exodus 12:14 NLT

Even to this day, many descendants of Abraham and Ishmael still apply the blood of sacrifices to the doors or walls of their houses as a sign of God’s protection from evil. Whether or not this custom originated from one who remembered being saved from God’s judgment by following these instructions, we do not know. What we do know is that God powerfully demonstrated his mercy to all those who believed.

And so the Israelites were freed from their bondage and thrust out of the land by their former masters. God had kept his promise—everything happened just as he said it would.



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CHAPTER EIGHT

1 BREAD, QUAIL AND WATER

2 TEN RULES

3 THE COURTROOM

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/8.html



1 BREAD, QUAIL AND WATER

Obviously, the Israelites were an excited multitude as they started off on their long journey. The Egyptians sped their departure by loading them down with valuables. With no time to pack in an orderly fashion, they left in a mighty rush driving their livestock before them. Multiply those factors with their approximate number—2.5 million—and you have confusion! Moses was the leader, but how do you yell, “This way!” to such a multitude? It was impossible to see Moses in the crowd! God solved the dilemma.

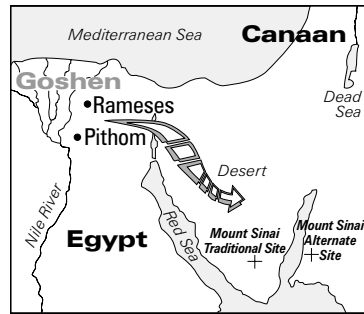
And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. Exodus 13:21 ESV

With a trailblazing beacon, all the people had to do was look ahead and follow the special cloud, trusting the LORD to guide them. They could even travel at night, courtesy of God’s pillar of fire. This was crowd control on a grand scale!

The most direct route from Egypt to Israel was inhabited by desert tribes who were very capable of taking care of themselves in a battle. With 2.5 million people marching their way, one could hardly have blamed them for defending themselves. But...

...God did not lead them on the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route ... God said, “If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.” So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness.

Exodus 13:17-18 NLT



God was watching out for the Israelites. He led them over a desert road and miraculously through the Red Sea,¹ delivering them from Pharaoh’s pursuing armies. On the other side of the Red Sea, they found themselves in a desolate wasteland devoid of enemies—and of food and water! So the people let loose with a massive grumble session.

Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness ... “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots

of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

Exodus 16:2-3 NKJV

The people complained and even wanted to return to slavery. Their cynical attitude towards God’s provision was saddening, for the LORD had shown vigilant care for them and wasn’t about to abandon them. They should have asked God for food, as he wanted to be their provider. But no, they grumbled!

Then the LORD said to Moses, “I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”

That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. “What is it?” they asked each other. And Moses told them, “It is the food the LORD has given you to eat.”

Exodus 16:11–15 NLT

God provided them with meat and bread and they didn’t even have to work for it. Every day the bread was available to be gathered and every day they would be reminded: *it is God who provides*. They must have felt a little embarrassed for having griped in the first place. God was teaching the Israelites yet another lesson.

A SIMPLE LESSON

The bread had a purpose greater than food. God said:

“I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions.”

Exodus 16:4 NLT

God told Moses to tell the people to gather only as much bread as they could eat in one day. It was an easy instruction...

But they did not listen to Moses; some kept part of it until morning, and it was full of worms and began to stink, and Moses was angry with them.

Exodus 16:20 NET

It was a simple lesson and no one was hurt, but through it the people learned that the LORD meant what he said and was to be trusted. Disobedience had unpleasant consequences.

GRIPING

Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give

us water that we may drink... Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." Exodus 17:1-4 NASB

So much for learning from past mistakes. The people were back in the grumble-and-gripe mode, only this time it had to do with water. The Israelites weren't doing a very good job of submitting to God's will and being his people.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff... I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink."

And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. Exodus 17:5-6 ESV

WATER

On occasion you see an artist's rendition of this miracle. Moses is portrayed as standing by a rock holding his staff, and a little stream of water is spurting onto the ground. But with a vast throng of thirsty people to water, plus all their livestock, God did not provide a little trickle, but a mighty torrent! The Bible says:

He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river.

Psalms 105:41 ESV

Again, the LORD provided for the people's needs even though they didn't deserve it. God, as their Creator-Owner, could have simply punished them for their chronic unbelief and disobedience. After all, sin does have consequences. But God was patient and gentle. He showed them grace—undeserved kindness. As a sinner, man does not deserve God's gracious love, but God cares for man in spite of his sin.

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2 TEN RULES

The LORD had said that the Israelites were to be an example to the rest of the world of God's relationship to man and man's relationship to God. But the Israelites had a lot to learn about the LORD. God's process of revealing himself was continuing, and the next major revelation of his character was about to begin.

In the third month after the Israelites went out from the land of Egypt... they came to the Desert of Sinai, and... Israel camped there in front of the mountain.

Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, “Thus you will ... declare to the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I lifted you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. And now, **if** you will diligently listen to me and keep my covenant, **then** you will be my special possession out of all the nations, for all the earth is mine, and you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you will speak to the Israelites.”

Exodus 19:1-6 NET

IF ... THEN

In simple terms God was saying, “If you obey me, then you will be accepted by me, and you will be a statement to all the other nations of what I am like.” The one condition, the big catch phrase was, “If you obey me, *then* ...”

So far the Israelites had a miserable track record. They gathered more bread than they needed, even when the LORD clearly told them not to. They grumbled rather than trusted. An honest response to God’s words would have gone like this: “God, we are failures at following your word. You are holy and we are sinful. If you are looking for us to be holy priests—if you are going to accept us on the basis of how well we obey you—we’re in trouble!”

But when Moses gathered all the people together and asked them how they felt about God’s declaration ...

... all the people responded together, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded.” So Moses brought the people’s answer back to the LORD.

Exodus 19:8 NLT

They all echoed with a hearty, “Sure God, anything you ask us is fine. We will make great priests. Holiness is no problem either. We will make the best holy nation you have ever seen. We can do it!” Well, maybe that is a little exaggerated, but you get the idea. The truth of the matter was that man, at this time, could not fully understand holiness or righteousness, so God was going to spell it out in detail.

VISUAL AIDS

The lesson started with some visual aids.

*The LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.”*Exodus 19:10-11 ESV



God told Moses they were to be consecrated, or separated. God told them to wash their clothes. This visual aid helped Israel



realize their need to be cleansed from sin. However, this ritual did not remove sin. Being clean on the *outside* did not make one clean on the *inside*. Clean hands cannot produce a clean heart.

Though the washing of the Israelites' clothes illustrated cleanliness or purity before the LORD, the washing in and of itself did not cleanse them of sin. These actions merely helped the people to understand that the LORD is holy and righteous and can only be approached in God's way.

The LORD wasn't done with his visual aids. He told Moses:

"Mark off a boundary all around the mountain. Warn the people, 'Be careful! Do not go up on the mountain or even touch its boundaries. Anyone who touches the mountain will certainly be put to death.'"

Exodus 19:12 NLT

The boundary line was a graphic picture of the separation that exists between God and man because of sin. Man was warned not to approach God, for he is holy and sinful man cannot live in his presence. It was a reminder that death is the consequence of sin.

So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire... When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder.

Exodus 19:16-19 NASB

God's final visual aids were frighteningly impressive: thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, the blast of a loud trumpet, smoke and fire. All the people shook! As sinful people, man had good reason to tremble in the presence of a holy God. The LORD was getting his point across.

In the next few minutes, man would gain a clearer understanding of what God is like. God was about to define what he meant by the words *holy* and *righteous*. It was like the LORD was saying, "You have seen with your own eyes that I am a God who cares for you. Now I have never done this before—but *if* you will obey the ten rules that I will give you, *then* you will be a holy people—a special people with a special relationship, belonging just to me."² In the garden of Eden, God had given Adam one rule which he failed to obey. Now God was about to give man ten rules.

Then God spoke.



RULE #1

"I am the LORD your God... You shall have no other gods before me."

Exodus 20:2,3 NET

The LORD was telling man not to worship anyone or anything else. The reason given was clear:

"I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God."

Isaiah 45:5 NASB

There was only one God to be honoured. It wasn't just a matter of trusting a god; it had to be *the* God—the true God. Those who desired to be righteous must worship the one and only Creator-God, the one who made promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

People often feel comfortable that they have kept this rule because they do not worship a pagan god. But the implication of the command is this: If family, friends, spiritual guides, status, work, appearance, money, recreation, retirement—anything or anyone—is more important to you than God, then you have broken this command.



RULE #2

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them."

Exodus 20:4-5 NIV

The first rule said we should not worship another god. In the second command, man was directed not to worship an image or idol of *any* god, whether it be true or false. God didn't even want mankind bowing down to images, icons or pictures which represented himself. Since the LORD is a spirit, there is no need for man to form a physical image of him. No man-made image is worthy of worship—only the true God is.

"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols."

Isaiah 42:8 NLT

Another of God's requirements for holiness was that one must not worship any image or picture of him or his creation.



RULE #3

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

Exodus 20:7 NIV

God was telling man that he should always be respected. As the sovereign God, even his name is not to be used lightly. As the Judge of all the earth, he deserves reverence. As King, he is worthy of our utmost honour. Rule #3 was clear. To be righteous, one must also esteem the Most High God.

If you have ever used God's name as a swear word, then you have broken this command. If you have ever said, "I will do such and such, *God willing*," without intending to keep your word, then you have shown disrespect for God's name and broken this law. If you have ever said, "*By God*, I did not do such and such!" when you knew you were guilty, then you have misused his name.



RULE #4

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work."

Exodus 20:8-10 ESV

God was telling the Israelites that they were to keep the seventh day, Saturday, as a rest day. This special day would show the rest of the world that God had established a distinct relationship with them. Scripture says:

"Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.'" *Exodus 31:13 NIV*

God wanted the Israelites to know that to be holy they must honour the Sabbath as a special sign of distinction.



RULE #5

"Honor your father and your mother."

Exodus 20:12 ESV

In this command God said that children should esteem their parents. God says the normal family should be a place of peace, not hostility. Children are to be respectful and obedient. In this context, parents are assumed to be looking out for the best interests of their family.

God was telling all children that holiness demands that they have an honourable relationship with their parents. The LORD wanted homes to be places of order and respect, not chaos and anger.

Talking back, ignoring, arguing, pouting, the silent treatment, criticism—all are ways of being disrespectful.

**RULE #6***"You shall not murder."*

Exodus 20:13 ESV

God had given life to man, so it was wrong for one man to take the life of another. But the LORD had more than the action of murder in mind. He was also targeting the intent behind the action. Scripture tells us that God ...

... judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:12-13 NIV

Because God looks on the heart, he interprets murder in a much broader sense than we do. The LORD considers certain types of anger as murder.

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment ... anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

Matthew 5:21-22 NIV

To meet God's standard of righteousness, one must not lose his temper, or be angry without just cause.

**RULE #7***"You shall not commit adultery."*

Exodus 20:14 ESV

God was saying that the only acceptable time to have sex is after you are married, and the only rightful person to share that intimacy with is your marriage partner.

But then the LORD goes one step further. Because he looks at the heart, he knows when someone has sinful thoughts.

"You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Matthew 5:27-28 NLT

To look at someone to whom you are not married with the desire to have sex means you have broken this law. To be holy means one must have a pure mind as well as pure actions.

**RULE #8***"You shall not steal."*

Exodus 20:15 ESV

God does not want anyone to take things that belong to others. God is the one who gives each person the right to own property.

To steal is to disobey the LORD, and one who has stolen cannot be considered righteous.

Theft includes cheating—whether on an exam or on taxes.



RULE #9

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

Exodus 20:16 NET

Man should always be honest, for God will have no part in deceitfulness. Earlier we saw that Satan is a liar, that by his very nature, he is deceitful. But God is the direct opposite. Truth comes from God’s nature—it’s his very essence. He is the ...

... God, who does not lie.

Titus 1:2 NET

When the LORD tells us something, we can count on it being true, because ...

... it is impossible for God to lie.

Hebrews 6:18 ESV

Because God is true, to him all lying is a defiant slap in the face. Satan is the “father of lies,” and anyone who tells a lie is following Satan’s agenda. Gossip, false accusations, slander, libel—all of these are sinful according to his Law.



RULE #10

*“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey **or anything that belongs to your neighbor.**”*

Exodus 20:17 NASB

Man must not envy someone else’s possessions, their abilities, their looks or whatever they may have.

Satan had said, “I will be like the Most High,” coveting God’s position. To covet, to be greedy or jealous, is sin and totally unacceptable to the LORD. It’s the path Satan followed.

In our society, we are in constant danger of disobeying this law. It’s very subtle. We have a craving to maintain the same standard of living as our neighbours. We are told we “deserve it,” which is an appeal to our pride—another sin.

Now I Know

So the giving of the Ten Commandments was concluded. God had them written on stone, probably to signify that his Law does

not change. Over the process of time, man might convince himself that cheating was okay, but the Law would still say it was wrong.

Now man knew what the LORD considered to be sin. God's Law revealed it.

It was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "You must not covet."

Romans 7:7 NLT

But questions remained. Just how strict was God about following these rules? Would it be acceptable if a person broke one occasionally? What did God expect?

3 THE COURTROOM

The Ten Commandments might be viewed as vague unless one knows how and when the rules need to be obeyed. Are there any exceptions? Suppose a person had committed adultery sometime in the past. Would God hold that against him forever? What would a perfect lawgiver expect?

To begin with, God tells us that to be accepted by him, we must keep all ten of the commands—every one of them!

*I testify again to every man...that he is **obligated to obey the whole law.***

Galatians 5:3 NET



We can't pick four and ignore the rest. God is very specific. We are required to obey all of them. Not only that, but ...

... [He] who obeys the whole law and but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

James 2:10 NET

If we disobey just one command—only *once*—it's like we have violated all of them. We are less than perfect. God cannot accept us into his holy presence.

The LORD is utterly perfect in his holiness, and he can only accept those who are equally perfect in their righteousness. *Man's righteousness must equal God's righteousness* or the relationship cannot be restored.

Not only must we keep the whole Law, but God holds us accountable for all sin, even the sin of which we are not aware.

If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible.

Leviticus 5:17 NIV

On one occasion I was teaching this subject to a couple of friends. As I reached this point in the lesson, one of my students banged his fist on the table and swore. (His friend pointed out to him that he had just broken one of God's laws by misusing God's name.) He said, "God is not fair! If this is the only way I can be accepted by God, he's made it impossible. There is no way I can keep that list of rules perfectly!" His frustration was very evident.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN

God knew that man could not keep this list of rules flawlessly. It was no surprise to him. His intention in giving them was clear.

*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says ... that **every mouth may be stopped** [or silenced], and **all the world may become guilty** [or accountable] before God.*

Romans 3:19 NKJV

This verse is saying two things:

1. The Law *silences* those who say their lives are good enough to be accepted by God. No one can candidly study these ten rules without sensing their sinfulness.



Breaking the Law is like cutting a string with ten knots. You only have to cut one knot for the whole string to be broken. In the same way, you only have to break one law to be guilty of violating God's entire standard of right and wrong.

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2. The Ten Commands show us that we are indeed lawbreakers—*guilty* of breaking God's laws. In the beginning, man had been God's friend, innocent of all evil. But when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's instructions, God laid aside the mantle of friendship and donned the magistrate's cloak. Now instead of God being a friend of man, he was a judge, summoning man to the courtroom bench. No lawyer rose to defend man's cause. None could. No advocate, no matter how clever, could lead the court into thinking the condemned was anything but what he was. There would be no hung jury. No bribes. The perfect Judge had spoken. The verdict was in. Man was guilty of breaking God's Law.

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 3:20 NIV

The purpose of the ten laws is to make us aware or conscious that we are sinners. It shows us God's holiness and our sinfulness. It's a simple measure of what's right and what's wrong. The Law is like a thermometer: it can show us that we are sick, but it is powerless to heal us.

A MIRROR

In many ways, the Ten Commandments are to us as a mirror is to a dirty face. If you are alone, you can't tell whether or not your face is clean. Someone could point at you and say, "Your face is filthy," but you could deny it outright and say, "My face isn't dirty—I don't see anything!" and you might truly believe it. But if given a mirror, you could see that your face was indeed grimy and you would no longer be able to deny the fact. Your mouth would be *silenced*. You would realize you were *guilty* of having a dirty face.

It's the same way with sin. We did not really know what sin was until God gave us the Law. Just as the mirror exposed the dirt, so the ten rules made us aware of sin.

The Ten Commands were not given as a list of rules to keep in order to make us right with God. That wasn't the Law's purpose. It would be like trying to rub the dirt off your face with a mirror! Mirrors are designed for reflecting, not cleaning. In fact, there's a good chance that in the process of trying to clean yourself with the mirror, you would smudge the glass, thus hampering its ability to give a clear reflection. People who try to be accepted by God

by keeping the Ten Commandments usually modify or minimize the commands so that they will not look so bad.

GOD'S VIEWPOINT

There is another way of looking at this. Remember how we compared our view of a maggot-infested rat to God's viewpoint on sin? Well, trying to please the LORD by keeping the Ten Commandments is comparable to spraying perfume on the rotten rat—it doesn't make it any more appealing to us. *The rat is still rotten.* In the same way, keeping the Ten Commandments doesn't make us any more acceptable to God. *We're still sinners.*

This brings us back to the reason for the Ten Commands. God gave the Law ...

...so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

Romans 7:13 NASB

God wants us to see all sin, big or small, the way he sees it: utterly sinful, totally destructive, grossly offensive, thoroughly repulsive, appalling, malignant, filthy. He wants us to comprehend that his purity far exceeds any level of righteousness we might attain on our own. He wants us to understand that even at the best of times, our goodness is not equal to his holiness. It doesn't even come close.

THE GULF

Until this time a man may have convinced himself that God loved him more than another, because he thought himself to be a better person. But with the giving of the Law, God wanted everyone to conclude:

I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

Psalms 51:5 NLT

Now, not only could man know his true sinfulness, but he could catch a glimpse of the LORD's perfection. God's holiness—his righteousness—was beyond man's reach, unattainable. The chasm caused by sin was wider than man expected. Because no one could keep the Law perfectly, the Law could not bridge the gap.

TWO GROUPS

The Israelites' reaction to the first reading of the Ten Commandments undoubtedly reflects the thinking of many people today. The Bible says that all the Israelites shook with fear, but probably the great majority were only terrified by the thunder and lightning. They were caught up in the externals, alarmed only by the tremendous

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display of power. As for the ten rules, they missed the point—they felt they could obey them just fine. So do many people today. They focus on obeying the commands and completely fail to understand the purpose of those commands.

On the other hand, there were those Israelites who had just gained a deeper awareness of God's perfection. They now knew what God meant when he said: righteousness *equals* sinlessness. They feared too, but for another reason. They knew they could never keep such a set of laws perfectly.

For whatever reason, Scripture says the Israelites trembled. The people ...

... said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."

Exodus 20:19 ESV

The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction."

Exodus 24:12 ESV

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The Ten Commandments were now in force and the Israelites were accountable to keep them as a moral standard. But for those who were honest with themselves, they now knew that if they were going to be accepted by God, they would have to come to him another way.

THE TEN SUGGESTIONS?

The Ten Commandments are sometimes referred to as the Moral Law, as they are concerned with ethical and moral behaviour.

Just because the Moral Law is unable to restore the broken relationship with God does not mean it is without value. Just as physical laws provide order in the universe, so spiritual laws provide order in a nation.

Many countries have rejected the biblical code of conduct at the risk of living in a morally-neutral society. No such society truly exists. No such civilization has ever survived. To take no stand is, in effect, to take a position.

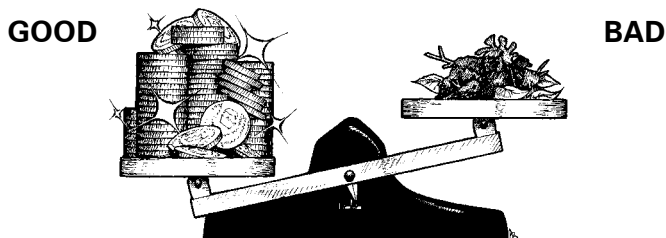
The rejection of biblical absolutes has resulted in a callousness towards wrong, with each generation becoming more comfortable with sin. The Bible teaches that this will eventually lead to chaos.

WHAT KIND ARE YOU?

Most people will agree that they are *sinners*. However, few will readily admit that they are *helpless sinners*. There is a big difference.

❖ Sinners believe there is something they can do to make themselves acceptable to God. They may believe that God wants them to observe the Ten Commandments. Or they may believe that attending religious meetings, praying faithfully, fasting, going on pilgrimages, giving to charity or being nice to their neighbours will make them pleasing to God.

The notion that a person's good can outweigh his bad and therefore merit God's acceptance, is totally foreign to the Bible. To do good is commendable, but Scripture teaches that none of these deeds can restore our broken relationship with God. We have a deep problem we can't get rid of—it's the sin condition.



CONCEPT NOT FOUND IN GOD'S WORD

❖ On the other hand, a *helpless* sinner knows there is nothing he can do to make himself acceptable to God. He cannot get rid of that dead rat of sin contaminating his life. Scripture says we are totally helpless.

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment . . . And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Isaiah 64:6 NASB

Even our goodness falls far short of God's holiness. For illustrative purposes, one could say *all our righteous acts are like filthy rats*. Just as a rotten rat is repulsive to us, so all sin is offensive to a pure, holy God.

CHAPTER NINE

1 THE TENT OF MEETING

2 UNBELIEF

3 JUDGES, KINGS AND PROPHETS

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/9.html



1 THE TENT OF MEETING

As we saw in the last chapter, no doubt there were those Israelites who thought they could be acceptable to God by keeping the Ten Commandments. Foolishly, they had chosen a path that led into a spiritual wilderness. On the other hand, there were others who were ready for God to show them the only way to acceptance.

Taking the broad scope of Scripture, let's speculate for a moment. If God was writing a lesson plan to teach man exactly what he must do to be right or righteous with him, how would he have started? Just what would have been his first point?

LESSON OUTLINE—POINT #1:

Illustration: A man swimming across a river was caught in the swift-flowing current. Floundering, he called for help. A group of people were watching but none were capable of helping the drowning man, except one strong swimmer.

Those on the bank kept urging this likely rescuer to go to the drowning man's assistance. But he didn't respond. He stood watching while the struggle for survival became more and more desperate. Finally, when the man became utterly exhausted, the strong swimmer dived into the water and pulled him ashore.

When the people criticized the rescuer for waiting so long, he said, "The drowning man would never have allowed me to help him while he had any strength of his own. I could only save him when he gave up trying to help himself."¹

Conclusion: The first step to approaching God is to realize you are a *helpless* sinner, incapable of saving yourself from the eternal consequences of sin.

If the LORD had presented his lesson this way, you can almost hear the Israelites crying out in frustration, "But God, you have already made that point. We know that!"

We could presume that God would reply, "Yes, I know, but that is the very point I want you to understand. The first step to acceptance by me is to realize that you are a helpless sinner. I can only rescue those who have given up trying to save themselves."

The above lesson may be imaginary, but the application is fact. It's what Scripture consistently teaches. Now let's go a step further.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."

Exodus 25:1-2,8 NKJV

9-A
16:53

A VISUAL AID

The Israelites were to build a sanctuary, a sacred place called the *Tabernacle*, where God could live among them. God was not asking them to do this because he needed a house. Rather, God was creating an elaborate visual aid. As we study, we will slowly gain an understanding of its full meaning. It takes a few pages to explain, so don't get impatient and jump ahead to the next chapter. It's an important piece of the puzzle.

It began with God asking for voluntary contributions for a building project. He only wanted people to give willingly, from the heart. There were no appeals or arm-twisting. What each one gave was up to him. However, God made one thing clear:

"You must build this Tabernacle and its furnishings according to the plans I will show you."

Exodus 25:9 NLT

BASIC LAYOUT

The Tabernacle could be disassembled and moved. The "tent" portion had solid walls with rug-like coverings for the roof. It was divided into two parts: one-third forming a room called the *Holy of Holies* or the *Most Holy Place* and the other two-thirds forming the *Holy Place*. A heavy curtain, sometimes referred to as the *veil*, separated the two areas.

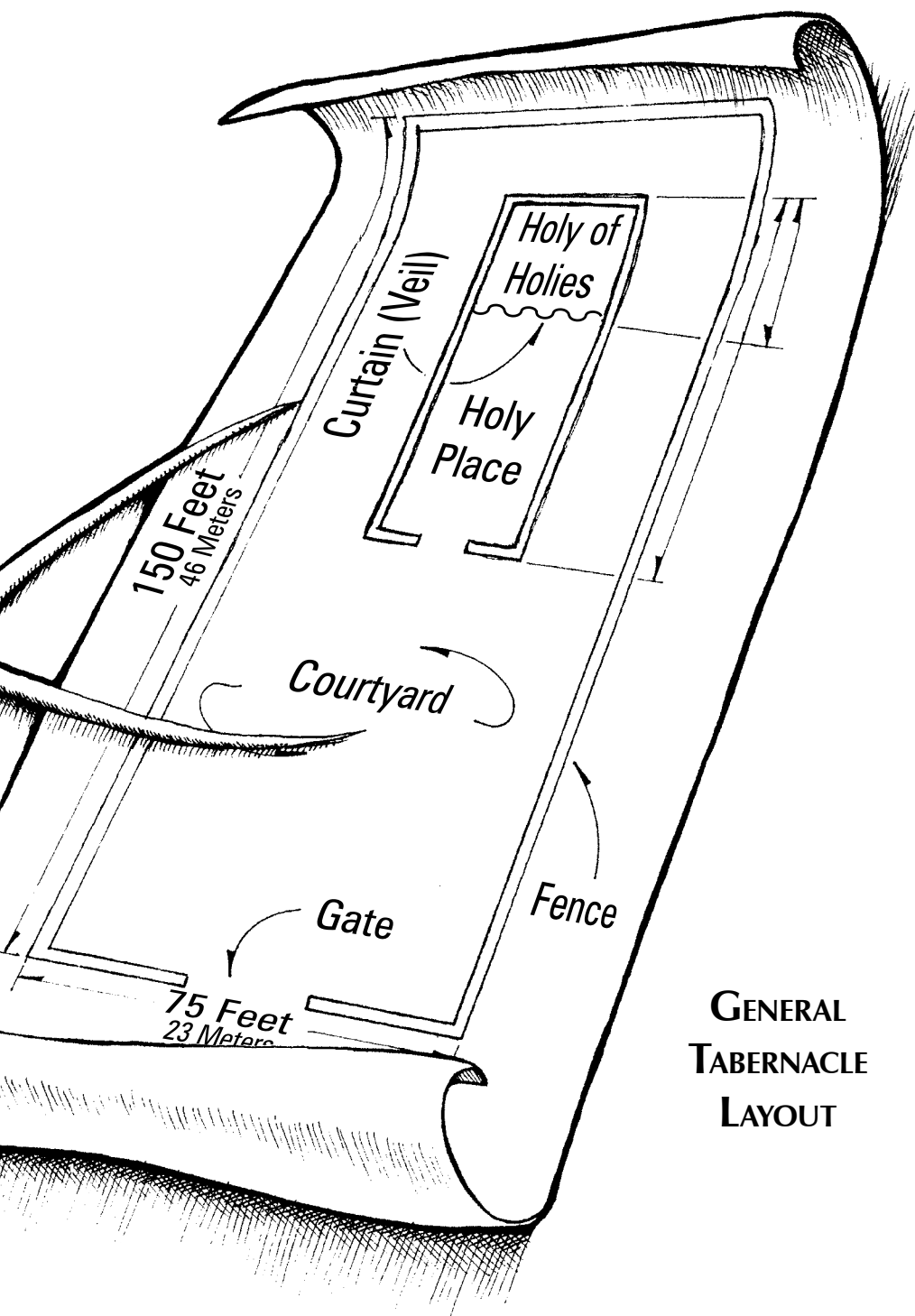
This curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

Exodus 26:33 NLT

The Tabernacle was completed with an external courtyard which, in turn, was surrounded by a fence approximately two metres (7 ft) in height. Access to the entire compound was gained through a single gate.

There were seven primary pieces of furniture inside the tent and outside in the courtyard.²



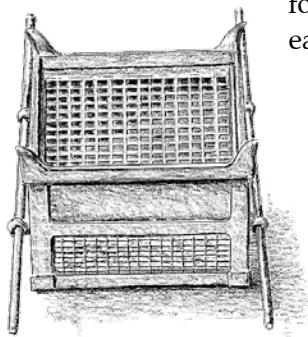


GENERAL
TABERNACLE
LAYOUT

THE COURTYARD

❶ THE BRONZE ALTAR:

Just inside the courtyard gate was the first piece of furniture. It was quite large, made of wood overlaid with bronze, having four horns on the corners and long poles on each side so that it could be carried.



❷ THE BASIN:

This large bronze bowl was situated halfway between the bronze altar and the Holy Place. Filled with water, it was used for ceremonial washing and signified that man must be pure when he approached God.



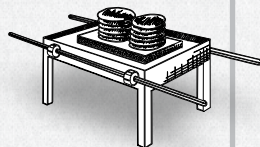
❸ THE LAMPSTAND:

The size of the lampstand was not defined by God, but we know its shape. It had a main shaft branching into seven arms. This lampstand provided the Tabernacle with its one and only source of light.



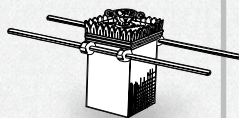
❹ THE TABLE WITH THE BREAD:

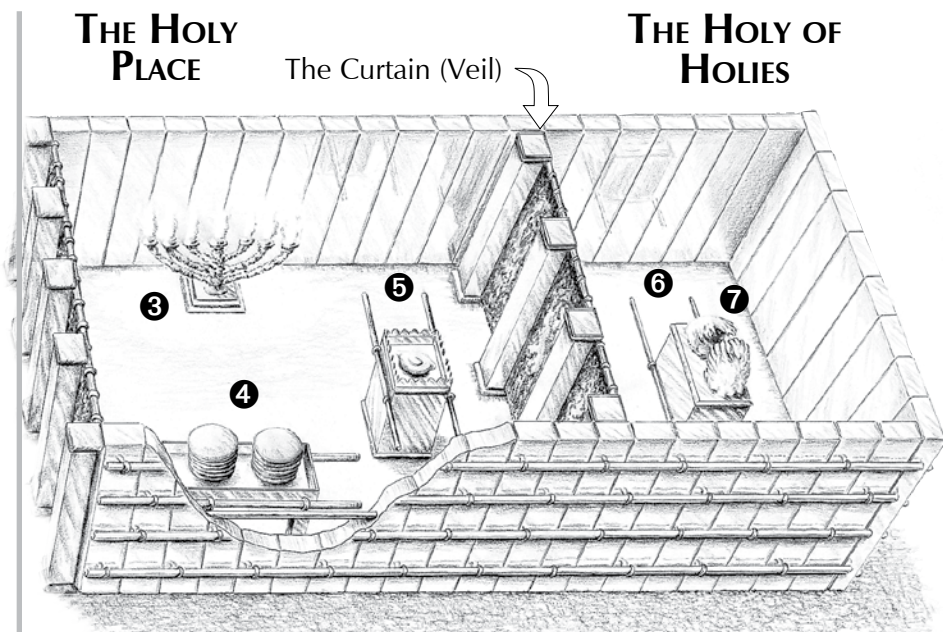
On this special table were placed 12 loaves of bread, each representing one of the tribes of Israel and God's daily care for them.



❺ THE ALTAR OF INCENSE:

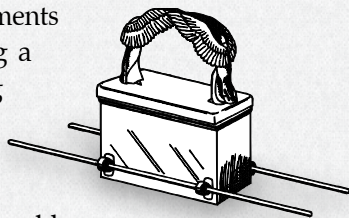
This altar was placed squarely before the curtain that divided the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. Incense was offered on it as the Israelites gathered outside to pray. The scent wafting toward the sky was symbolic of prayers going up to God.





6 THE ARK OF THE COVENANT:

This small wooden box overlaid with pure gold was designed in part to function as a chest. We have already studied two of the objects it held—the tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them and a pot containing a sample of the bread God was providing for them in the desert.



7 THE ATONEMENT COVER:

The Ark of the Covenant had an intricate gold lid or cover comprised of two angels, their wings outstretched. The Ark and its atonement cover were the only pieces of furniture placed in the Holy of Holies. God said:

"I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant. From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel."

Exodus 25:22 NLT

THE PRIESTS

"Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest."

Exodus 28:1 NKJV

God asked Moses to appoint Aaron and his sons as priests in the Tabernacle with Aaron appointed as the high priest. God set these men apart from the others, not because they were special in themselves, but because the LORD wanted the people to respect his holiness. God didn't want an unorganized rabble taking care of the Tabernacle. The priests were specially trained to follow God's instructions and they functioned as custodians, taking care of the Tabernacle as the nomadic Israelites moved from one place to another.

THE TABERNACLE COMPLETED

The entire structure was finished nine months after the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai.

Then Moses inspected all their work... it had been done as the LORD had commanded him.

Exodus 39:43 NLT

So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month, in the second year.

Exodus 40:17 NET

With the Tabernacle completed, the cloud that led the Israelites moved into position above the Holy of Holies. It signified God's presence in the midst of his people.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting... Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:34-35 NET

THE VISUAL AID IMPLEMENTED

With the Tabernacle in place, it was time to implement this large visual aid. God said to Moses:

"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any of you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock.'"

Leviticus 1:2 NIV

God was telling man to bring a sacrifice to the Tabernacle.

It had to be *"from the herd."*

Leviticus 1:3 NIV

It could be a sheep, goat or bullock, but it could not be just any animal such as a horse or camel.

They were to *"offer a male."*

Leviticus 1:3 NIV



It was to be “without defect.”

Leviticus 1:3 NIV

There could be no disease nor lameness.

“He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD.”

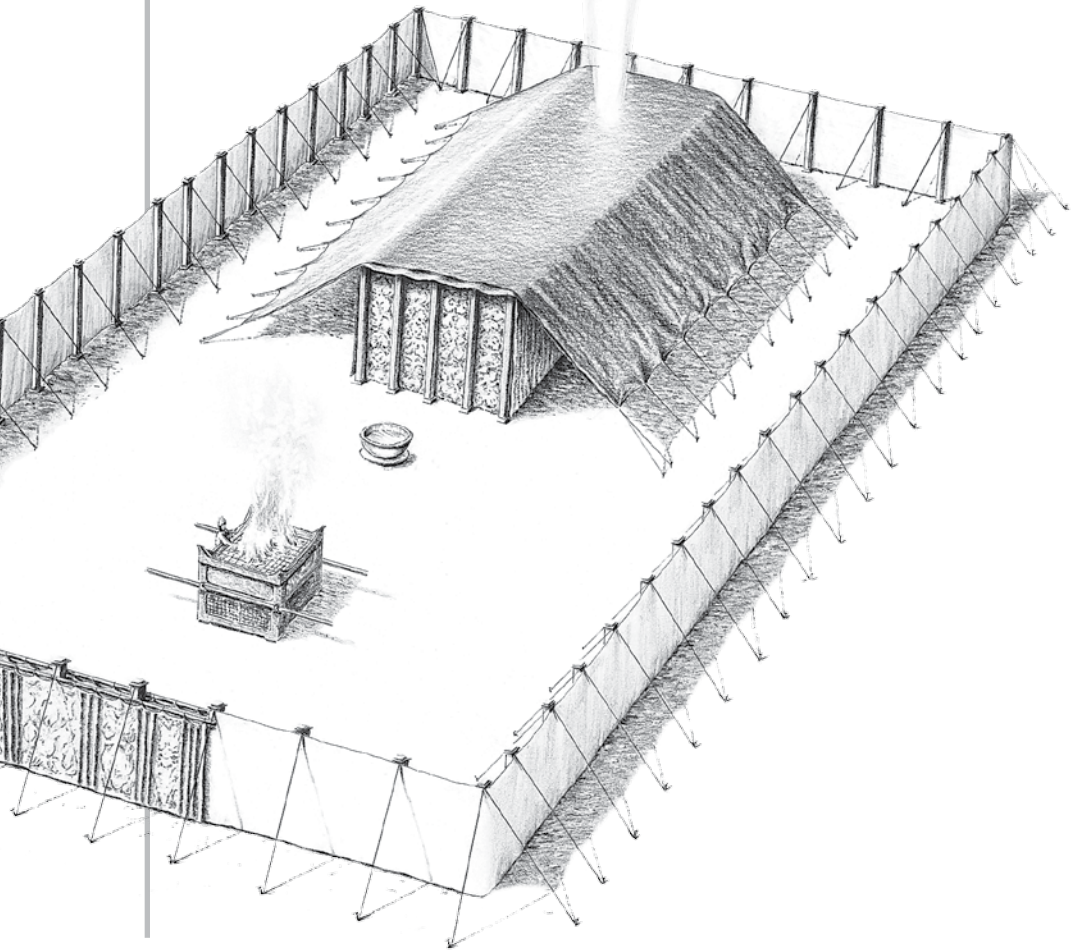
Leviticus 1:3 NIV

The sacrifice was to be offered just inside the door of the courtyard on the Bronze Altar.* In addition to acknowledging oneself as a helpless sinner, this was the first step in approaching God. The individual bringing it was to...

*In Scripture, bronze is commonly associated with judgment on sin.

“...put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it [would] be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him...”

Leviticus 1:4 NKJV



In placing his hand on the head of the offering, the man identified himself with the sacrifice. The hand on the head symbolized the individual's sin and guilt being moved from the man onto the animal. Because the animal now carried the man's sin, it had to die. Death is the penalty for sin. The person offering the sacrifice slit its throat, a final acknowledgment that it was his sin that caused the death of the animal. It was a case of the innocent dying in the place of the guilty as a substitute. The Bible says that God accepted the sacrifice on his behalf.

This must have sounded very familiar to the Israelites. Had not all those who truly believed God since the days of Adam, Abel and Noah come to God offering blood sacrifices? Indeed, they had.

A RIGHTEOUS SAVIOUR

Once again, the LORD was reminding his people that the only way to acceptance was to believe that he is a ...

... righteous God and a Savior.

Isaiah 45:21 NASB

In offering the animal sacrifice, the people were giving outward evidence of an inner trust in God—it showed they believed the LORD. Because death is the penalty for sin, the sacrifice pictured what was necessary for sin to be forgiven.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22 NET

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for



yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Leviticus 17:11 NIV

When God saw the death of the animal, he was satisfied that the law of sin and death had been justly met—there had been a death payment for sin. God would not hold man's sin-debt against him; man would not be judged; the eternal consequences would no longer apply. Instead, the LORD would honour the person's trust in him and credit righteousness to his account, just as he had to Abraham.

"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:3 NET

Because that righteousness was coming from God, it fully provided man with the perfection needed to live in God's presence.

There was nothing new about this at all. It was the way that Abel, Noah, Abraham and all the other righteous men down through the ages had come to God. Of course, the blood (or life) of animals could not permanently cancel man's sin-debt, since the life of an animal is not equal in value to the life of a human. Thus, the Scriptures teach us that animal sacrifices were ...

... a shadow [a visual aid] ... not the reality ... For the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins.

Hebrews 10:1,4 NET

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

In fulfilling their duties, the priests had complete freedom within the Tabernacle compound, with one exception. They were absolutely forbidden to enter the Holy of Holies.

The Holy of Holies was where God's presence symbolically lived with man. Sinful man wasn't even to peek into the room. The curtain that hung between the two rooms was thick, shielding all from an inquisitive eye. It protected the most sacred of all places. Even Aaron, as high priest, was not to enter the Holy of Holies except on the Day of Atonement.³

But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

Hebrews 9:7 NIV

Any violation of this instruction would result in his death.

The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover."

Leviticus 16:2 NIV

The Day of Atonement offering was a yearly ceremony, a constant reminder of man's need to have his sin hidden from the eyes of a holy God. This ceremony was repeated each year because, although God did not hold man's sin against him, the blood of animals did not remove the sin-debt. The blood was only a temporary covering.

The Tabernacle, the furniture, the priests, the sacrifices, the Day of Atonement—all were part of God's elaborate visual aid. These visuals helped to explain what the LORD was planning to do for mankind.

2 UNBELIEF

9-B
1:00

The Israelites were learning more and more about the LORD. God was faithfully providing them with food and water. The Bible tells us that God even made their shoes especially durable—they didn't wear out. The Israelites now had a moral code by which to live. Although observing the Ten Commandments did not result in acceptance with God, it did provide a standard of right living that united the nation. They knew what was right and what was wrong. God had also shown his love by providing a way to be accepted—by faith—as evidenced through the blood sacrifice. You would think the Israelites would have been eternally grateful for all that the LORD was doing for them. If they were grateful, their outward actions didn't demonstrate it. They began to grumble—again.

In case we should take a self-righteous attitude and think that it was only the Israelites who were hard-headed, we must remember that we are made out of the same flesh and blood.

In a very real sense, the Israelites were functioning as representatives of the entire human race. As such, they were becoming better acquainted with God year by year, but the knowledge they gained also brought additional responsibility. Scripture says:

From everyone who has been given much, much will be required, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.

Luke 12:48 NET

Collectively, the Israelites now knew more about God than any other nation on earth.

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the

wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food."

Numbers 21:4-5 ESV

These accusations were not true—God, the great Provider, *was* meeting their needs. But instead of thanking the LORD for his daily care, they accused him of neglect. They ignored God's Law, telling lies and dishonouring his name.

As we have seen before, to break a law has consequences. Just as defying God's law of gravity results in fractured bones, so violating God's Moral Law has ramifications.

In the past, God had repeatedly overlooked* their sin—he had been gracious. But the Israelites were no longer beginners in their relationship with their Creator-Owner. They had learned many things about God. They now knew the Ten Commandments and that knowledge made them accountable. God could not condone the people's sin and say, "Oh forget it. We'll pretend it never happened." No, sin has its consequences. It always does.

*God only overlooks sin for a period of time. He does judge all sin. Compare Acts 17:30.

So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died.

Numbers 21:6 NLT

From the very beginning, God had said that sin would lead to death: physical, relational and eternal. Now that truth was graphically illustrated as many died.

The Israelites were desperate and realized that only God could save them from his punishment. They were helpless.

The people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us."

Numbers 21:7 NKJV

God's purpose in judgment is to bring about a change of attitude—a change of mind. In the Bible, this change is described by the word *repent*. Only during this life on earth can people repent and be heard by God. After physical death, when the sinner is facing judgment in the Lake of Fire, it is too late to have a "change of mind."

The Israelites recognized that they had sinned, so they repented and asked God to deliver them. They were trusting God again.

So Moses prayed for the people.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."

9-D
0:32

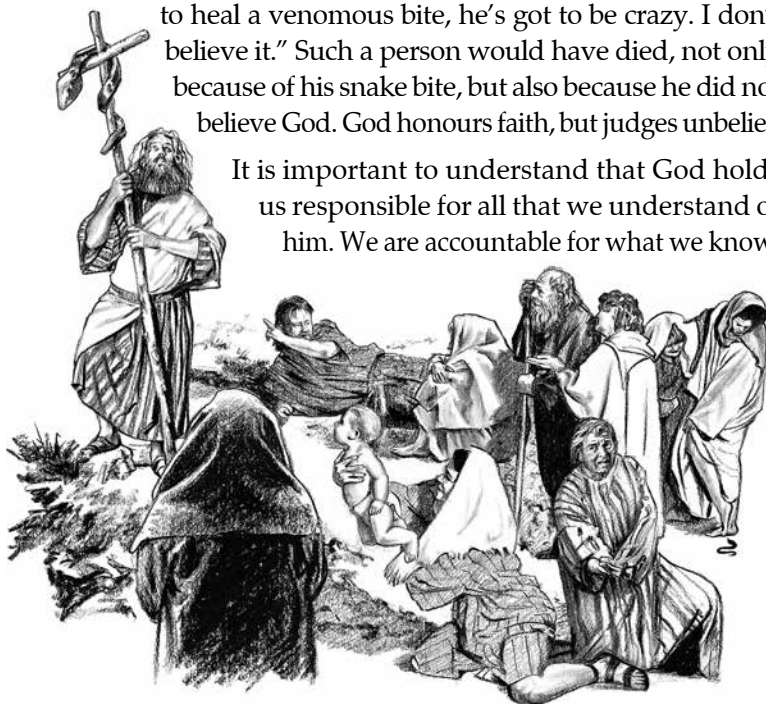
So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

Numbers 21:7–9 NKJV

The serpent on the pole was not some sort of “mind-over-matter” gimmick. God was simply giving the Israelites an opportunity to demonstrate that they believed him. When an Israelite was bitten, all he had to do was turn and look at the bronze serpent and he would be healed. With that look, the individual expressed his faith in the LORD, trusting him to be true to his word.

Let’s suppose one fellow was bitten and did not look at the bronze serpent. Instead, he told his neighbours, “Old Moses is really demented. If he thinks looking at that ridiculous snake is going to heal a venomous bite, he’s got to be crazy. I don’t believe it.” Such a person would have died, not only because of his snake bite, but also because he did not believe God. God honours faith, but judges unbelief.

It is important to understand that God holds us responsible for all that we understand of him. We are accountable for what we know.

9-E
0:48

REVIEW: DEATH

The Bible speaks about death in three different ways:

1. **Death of the body:** separation of man’s spirit from his body
2. **Death to a relationship:** separation of man’s spirit from God
3. **Death to a future joy:** separation of man’s spirit from God forever

The wages of sin is death.

Romans 6:23 NKJV

3 JUDGES, KINGS AND PROPHETS

We have now come to a lesson that compresses centuries of events into just a few pages. For those of you who are allergic to history, be assured that it's a painless study and even if you don't understand it all, you will pick up needed tidbits of background information. It will help if you compare the titles at the head of each section with the timeline on pages 158-159.

Forty years passed from the time the Israelites left Egypt until the time they entered Canaan. Moses died before he entered the promised country and was replaced by an able general named Joshua.

After entering the land, it took years before the Israelites were able to fully settle it. The land was divided according to tribes with each tribe, for the most part, representing one of Jacob's (or Israel's) 12 sons.

TIME OF THE JUDGES

For a period of time the Israelites trusted God, but then they began to drift from the truth and ended up believing in idols. The LORD punished Israel for worshipping false gods by allowing them to be overrun by foreign nations who forced Israel to serve them and pay tribute. After a time the Israelites would repent and call on God to deliver them from their oppressors.

God would raise up a leader, called a judge, and the Israelites would throw out the foreign conquerors. So began a cycle that was to last approximately 300 years. This cycle occurred over and over again. During this time there were 15 judges.



On some occasions, God used other nations to punish the Israelites when they trusted a false god. At other times, God used Israel to punish different nations for being idolatrous. God is impartial—he has no favourites, as it were. He wants all people of all nations to trust in him alone.

TIME OF THE KINGS

Of all the nations of the world, Israel was the most privileged, for God himself was their Leader and King. But as time passed and the Israelites observed other nations, they rejected God and

demanded a human king. God granted their request, but their propensity to wander off and trust false gods remained.

Israel was to have many kings, but only a few believed and obeyed the LORD. Because of this, the cycle of earlier years continued, only instead of a judge, they now had a king.

Several of the kings were especially noteworthy. Probably the greatest and best known of Israel's monarchs was David. Unlike many of the other kings who ruled over Israel, King David truly trusted God. He believed that only God could save him from the consequences of sin. David called the LORD, "My Saviour."

King David was also a great prophet, inspired by God to write down Scripture. He is noted for the songs he wrote, praising God for his love and mercy. David wrote specifically about the Promised Deliverer, and God made a pledge to him that the Deliverer would be one of his descendants.⁴ King David had a great ambition to replace the portable Tabernacle with a permanent structure of similar design. It would be called the Temple. He wanted to build it in Jerusalem, which had become the capital of the country during his reign. Although David gathered the building materials, it was his son, Solomon, who actually saw the task accomplished.

King Solomon is known not only for his great wisdom, but also for the Temple he built. This magnificent structure was constructed in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, possibly on the same site where Abraham was prepared to offer Isaac.

After Solomon's death, the nation split in two: the northern ten tribes retained the name Israel, while the southern two tribes became the nation of Judah. This division seemed to be the Israelites' first step towards a semi-permanent distance from God. The northern tribes led the way. The people went through the motions of doing what the LORD said, but their hearts were far from God. They had failed to be a testimony to the world in a way that pleased God.

PROPHETS

God sent prophets, men who not only preached against the wandering morals of the people, but also warned of judgment to come. These prophets thundered against Israel, warning the nation that God would judge them for their self-centredness. They had become callous to foreigners, insensitive to the weak, taking that which was not theirs to take.

This is what the LORD says:

“For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back {my wrath}. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed.

Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name. They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of their god they drink wine taken as fines.” Amos 2:6-8 NIV

Many of the prophets were also prompted by God to write Scripture. They gave specific information about the coming Promised Deliverer.

Generally speaking, the prophets were not well-received by the Israelites or their respective kings. There was a reason. The prophets were giving them a message they did not want to hear. For example, the prophet Isaiah told the people:

The LORD says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”

Isaiah 29:13 NIV

The majority despised the prophets’ message and refused to trust God. They persecuted and killed them. To complicate matters further, false prophets inspired by Satan churned the spiritual scene. Even though God provided clear instructions to enable his people to discern the difference between truth and error, the false prophets were much more popular, for they were telling the people the very things they wished to hear. God sent the prophet Jeremiah to warn them to beware of false prophets.

Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, ‘It shall be well with you’... I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.”

Jeremiah 23:16-17,21-22 ESV

DISPERSAL OF ISRAEL

Eventually the LORD did send judgment. The Assyrians invaded the ten northern tribes in 722 BC and took them into captivity. The Bible does not record an organized return of these people to the land of Israel.



JUDAH TAKEN CAPTIVE

The two southern tribes continued as a distinct political entity until 586 BC, when the Babylonians* ravished the city of Jerusalem, demolished the great Temple of Solomon and took them into exile.

*People from the area where the Tower of Babel was built.

While in exile the people began to be called Jews, a reference to the fact that most of them were from the tribe of Judah. With the Temple no longer available as the centre of worship, the Jews introduced the synagogue* as a place for social interaction, teaching and the study of the Scriptures.

*Greek for the word assemblies.

The exile continued for 70 years, but in 536 BC the two southern tribes began to trickle back to their homeland to settle in and around Jerusalem, in the area formerly occupied by the tribe of Judah. The Temple was rebuilt, though not in the grandeur of Solomon's day, and the sacrificial system was reinstituted.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GREEKS

Around 400 BC, the biblical record pauses and remains silent for a period of some four centuries. History didn't stand still though. Alexander the Great, the brilliant general of the Greeks, swept through the Middle East engulfing the Jews in the process. His emissaries introduced Greek as the trade language and the Hellenistic culture became a status symbol for centuries to follow.

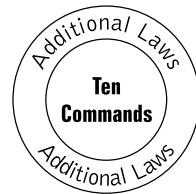
9-F
2:17

Some Jews freely embraced the Greek culture, combining it with their beliefs about God. These people were called *Sadducees*. Though small in number, they were people of wealth and influence. They tended to control the high priest, a position that had come to be bought and sold.



For about two hundred years, the Jews endured a succession of Greek occupying forces, until 166 BC when they revolted. Judas Maccabeus led the people into a period of autonomy.

During this time a party of Jewish religious zealots, called *Pharisees*, came to the forefront. The Pharisees fought the influence of the Greek culture and clung to the Law given to Moses. In their zeal, they created a protective ring of other laws around Moses' Law so that none of the real Law would be broken. These additional laws became an authority of their own, assuming equal weight with the Law of Moses.



Another significant social force in Jewish life was the scribes, the human equivalent to photocopiers. Long before the advent of printing presses, these men copied with extreme care the Word of God over and over again. The term *scribe* implied education and religious fervour. It was more of a job description than a religious or political party. Unfortunately, their diligence was often mingled with arrogance.

THE ROMANS

The Jews' liberty under the Maccabean leadership lasted barely 100 years. The iron heel of Rome crushed the Jews' freedom in 67 BC when General Pompey entered Jerusalem.

Rome was quite accommodating of the Jewish religion as long as the Jews paid their taxes and did not foment rebellion. The civilized world of the day had entered into an uneasy peace.

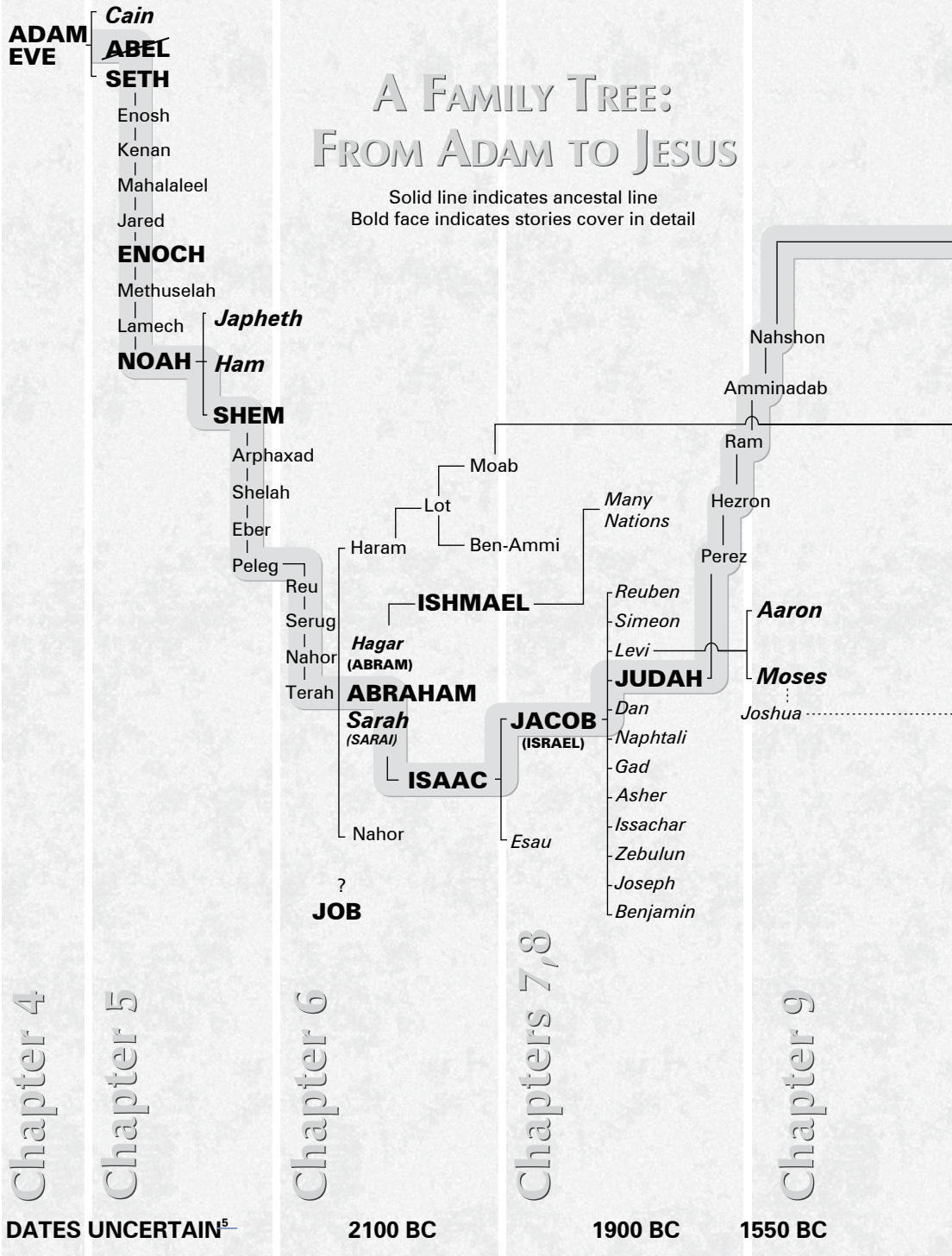
The Roman Empire was far too large to be administered effectively from Rome, so local leaders were selected to rule the different

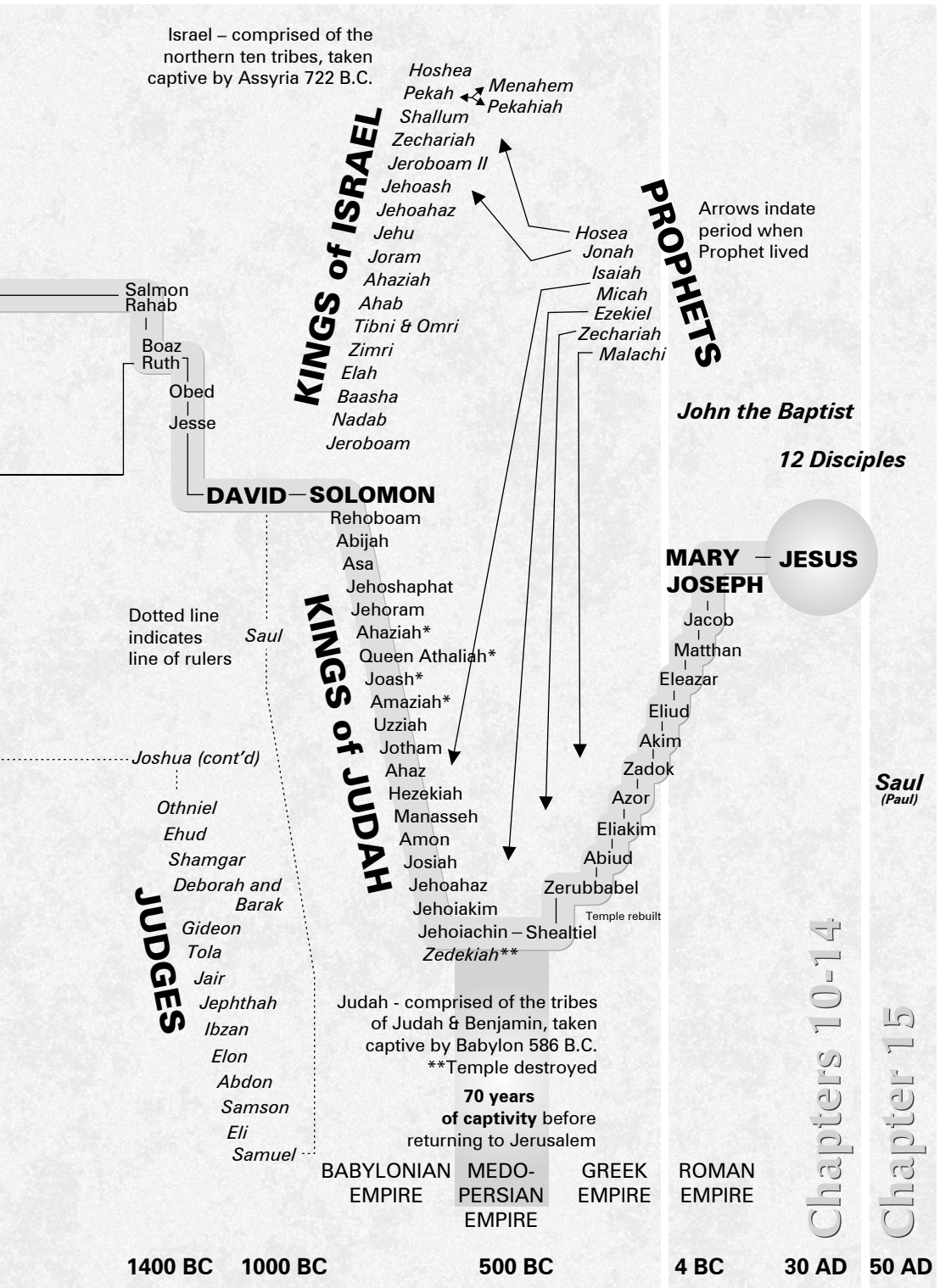
regions. In Judea, now a province of Rome, a man named Herod was appointed as a puppet king. He would come to be known as Herod the Great. Cruel beyond belief, Herod was a follower of the Jewish religion in name only. Under Rome's authority, he and his descendants would rule the resentful Jewish world for the next 100 years. The people yearned for rescue—for one who could give them relief.

More than 2000 years had passed since God first promised Abraham that one of his descendants would be the Promised Deliverer. Throughout the centuries God always had a people, though often few in number, who believed his Word and were right with him. These true believers had waited in eager anticipation for the Deliverer to come. In these early years of the Roman Empire, those who clung tenaciously to God's promises were still waiting to see the fulfillment of what God had promised. Though the people were unaware of it, God's time had come. The stage was now set. The angels of Heaven must have hushed. Satan must have shuddered. Who would this Promised Deliverer be?

A FAMILY TREE: FROM ADAM TO JESUS

Solid line indicates ancestral line
Bold face indicates stories cover in detail





*Rulers that do not appear in Matthew's account of Jesus' ancestral line.

CHAPTER TEN

1 THE ANGEL GABRIEL

2 THE MESSIAH

3 AMONG THE SAGES

4 THE PROPHET JOHN

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/10.html



1 THE ANGEL GABRIEL

For centuries, Satan had held man in a death grip. Man had struggled along under a mountainous burden of sin with only one hope on the horizon—a Promised Deliverer. It was true that God in his mercy had allowed an innocent animal to die in man's place—as a substitute, but that provided only a temporary payment for sin. In the full scope of eternity, the blood of animals could not remove sin; it only covered it for a time. The Scriptures make it clear that ...

... it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 10:4 NASB

Was there an answer? Well, perhaps one man might be willing to die for another, but that wasn't a solution either. One sinner could not save another sinner.

It would be like two men who had fallen into an old mine shaft. Struggling in the darkness and mud at the bottom of the pit, the one said to the other, "Get me out of this appalling place; I am sinking in this foul slime." The other man replied, "Are you insane? I'm drowning too! I can't help you." In the same way, it is impossible for one sinner to pull another sinner out of the abyss of sin.

But surely, there had to be one who could help. However, in looking over the face of the globe, no perfect man could be found. Whether prophet or priest, every man from the beginning of time had been born as a *son of Adam*, born with Adam's sin nature, born with the awful stench of sin permeating his life. No man could function as a deliverer simply because every man had his own sin penalty to contend with.

Man needed a saviour from outside the pit, one who was sinless, one who had no sin-debt, one who would be able to save all humanity from the horrible mire of sin. But who would this deliverer be? Where would God find such a sinless person? Would God assign the job to an angel or a prophet? It seemed people weren't sure. How would God make it clear just who the Promised Deliverer was? When he arrived, how would one know?

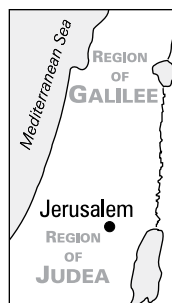
Before the arrival of the Deliverer, God was going to prepare the world by sending a special messenger to announce the impending event.

THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH

During the reign of Herod king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah...and he had a wife named Elizabeth, who was a

descendant of Aaron. They were both righteous in the sight of God, following all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. But they did not have a child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both very old.

Now while Zechariah was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, he was chosen ... to enter the holy place of the Lord and burn incense.



Now the whole crowd of people were praying outside at the hour of the incense offering. An angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, appeared to him. And Zechariah, visibly shaken when he saw the angel, was seized with fear. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son; you will name him John. Joy and gladness will come to you, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord ... He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go as forerunner before the Lord ... to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him."

Luke 1:5-17 NET

The angel Gabriel had told Zechariah that his son, John, would be the messenger sent to prepare the way for the coming of the LORD. That was good news alright, but it was that last tidbit of information that held the greatest significance. Four hundred years before his time, the prophet Malachi had written about this event:

10-A
0:54



"See, **I** will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before **me**. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," **says the LORD Almighty.**

Malachi 3:1 NLT

There it was in plain words. Zechariah must have wondered why he had not seen it before. It was obvious! The LORD Almighty had said, "**I** will send my messenger to prepare the way before **me**!" Moreover, the angel said that the messenger who would prepare his way would be Zechariah's own son, John.

ELIZABETH

Zechariah went home dumbfounded. And God kept his word; it happened just as the angel said it would.

After some time his wife **Elizabeth became pregnant**, and for five months she kept herself in seclusion. She said, "This is what

the Lord has done for me at the time when he has been gracious to me, to take away my disgrace among people.” Luke 1:24-25 NET

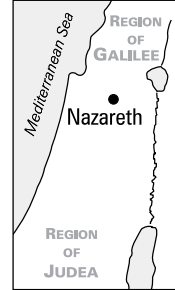
But a question must have nagged at the back of Zechariah’s mind. Just how would the LORD Almighty come to earth? Would he come in a golden chariot driving seven white steeds, surrounded with legions of angels all dressed in brilliant light? Would he unseat the Roman rulers—dump Herod off his throne? The angel had not said.

MARY

The scene now shifts. The angel made another visit, this time to a young lady named Mary.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary.

Luke 1:26-27 NET



Joseph and Mary were engaged to be married. Scripture says that both Joseph and Mary were direct descendants of King David who had lived 1000 years earlier.

The angel came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you!”

But she was greatly troubled by his words and began to wonder about the meaning of this greeting. So the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God! Listen: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.”

Luke 1:28-31 NET

Now it was Mary’s turn to be speechless. When she finally found her tongue, she asked a very logical question.

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

Luke 1:34-35 NASB

Mary was to be the mother of the Deliverer—the one promised to Abraham and his descendants down through the ages!

It all made sense now. Mary knew the stories well. Way back in the garden of Eden, God had promised Eve that the Promised Deliverer would be *her* offspring. It did not say *their* offspring, referring to both man and woman. Now the promise was about to be fulfilled and the child would be born of a virgin—it would be her offspring only. The baby would not have a human father.

10-B
0:26

What had seemed to be an insignificant choice of phrasing now carried tremendous weight.

But this little notation in the footsteps of history had greater ramifications. Because the baby would not be conceived by the seed of the man, the baby would not be part of Adam's contaminated bloodline. All descendants of Adam had inherited his nature—the sin nature.¹ But Jesus would not be a *son of Adam*.

Rather, he was the *Son of God*.^{*} He would have the nature of the God Most High. Thus, Scripture says:

**see pages 165-167 for an explanation of the term Son of God.*

The first man [Adam] was of the dust of the earth, the second man [Jesus] from heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:47 NIV

No wonder the angel referred to the baby as the *Holy One*. The child would be sinless, just as God is sinless. Jesus would be perfect from conception.

So, the LORD Almighty would not be coming with all of Heaven's pomp and grandeur. Rather, he would arrive on the planet as all mankind has ever done—as a baby! The angel Gabriel said to Mary:

“And look, your relative Elizabeth has also become pregnant with a son in her old age—although she was called barren, she is now in her sixth month! For nothing will be impossible with God.”

So Mary said, “Yes, I am a servant of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1:36-38 NET

Mary knew Elizabeth was too old to have a child. Surely if it was possible for Elizabeth to conceive, then it was just as believable for a virgin to give birth. Mary chose to trust God.

THE PROPHET JOHN

Now the time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son.

Luke 1:57 NET

John was born just as God had promised. It was quite an occasion, and well it should have been, for a stigma was attached to those who could not bear children. Following the naming ceremony, Zechariah burst into a speech, uttering a benediction of praise to God. Scripture says:

Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy: “Praise the Lord...just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant—the covenant he swore with an oath to our ancestor Abraham.”

Luke 1:67-70,72-73 NLT

What he had to say was really a mini-tour of the world's history, punctuated with the repeated promises God had given over the centuries—the promise to send a Deliverer. You can see the elderly Zechariah holding the child high, fixing his eyes on baby John's face as he continued:

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High. For you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways.” Luke 1:76 NET

John would be the messenger who would announce the arrival of the Promised Deliverer to the world.

THE MEANING OF A NAME

Scripture records many instances of prophets who lived long before the birth of Jesus, who wrote with unerring accuracy about his coming. Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah wrote:



*For to us a **child** is born, to us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Everlasting Father**, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6 ESV

Notice that the child is called “*Mighty God, Everlasting Father*”—two names that can mean nothing else but God.

As we have seen before, God has many names, each describing something of his character. We find an interesting contrast between two names used of Jesus:

1. **The Son of God:** Some have understood the term *Son of God* to mean that God had sexual relations with Mary. Such a thought is not only erroneous, it's blasphemous. The Word of God does *not* teach such a concept anywhere. Indeed, it says the opposite. Scripture clearly tells us that Mary was a virgin until *after* Jesus was born. Jesus was conceived, not through physical union, but by a miracle. God empowered Mary's body to do that which is not natural—to give birth to a baby while still a virgin.

So, if the term does not have physical implications, what does it mean?

Most languages use the term *son* in ways that do not confine it to a physical descendant. For example, if a person is referred to as a “son of the road,” it is understood that the individual is

Continued on next page

a traveller. (Roads do not give birth to children!) In the same way, Scripture uses this idiomatic form of language to make a point about a person's *character*. Consider these examples:

- ❖ ...Joseph... who was also called Barnabas... (which translated means *Son of Encouragement*). Acts 4:36 NASB

We understand by this that Joseph's life was distinguished by the encouragement he gave to others, not that his father's name was Encouragement.

- ❖ ...the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 5:6 NASB

Obviously, this does not mean that a fellow called Disobedience had several sons. Instead, it is referring to those who, by nature, are disobedient.

- ❖ You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness. Acts 13:10 ESV

Clearly, Satan did not take a wife and have a son! The passage is referring to a wicked person.

So when Scripture talks about Jesus as the *Son of God*, we need to understand that it refers to his character. He had a perfect, holy nature, the nature of God, in contrast to a mere human who has the corrupt nature expected of a *Son of Adam*.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

Hebrews 1:3 NIV

2. The Son of Man: This term does not imply that Jesus had a human father. Joseph was Mary's husband but not Jesus' father. Jesus only used the term *Son of Man* in reference to himself. It has two aspects:

- a. *It declares his humanity.* Although Jesus did not have a human father, he did take on human form. He lived as a human lived, yet without sin. We will see the importance of this as we progress in the story.
- b. *It declares his true identity.* For centuries, scholars of the Holy Scriptures recognized this term as referring to the Deliverer. Jesus quoted these prophets, pointing out that he fulfilled their references to the Promised Deliverer. Consider what the prophet Daniel wrote more than 500 years before Jesus' birth:



*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the **Son of man** came ... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.*

Daniel 7:13-14 KJV

As we progress through Scripture, we will understand the implications of this term to a greater degree.

NAMES COMBINED

The two terms *Son of God* and *Son of Man* are only two of hundreds of names and titles applied to Jesus. When brought together, they find their expression in this fact:

God was manifest in the flesh.

1 Timothy 3:16 KJV

God did not cease to be God when he became man. Nor did he become sinful when he took on the form of a man. Though he accepted certain self-imposed limitations, he was still all-powerful, still all-knowing, still perfect in righteousness. How he could restrict himself to a human body and still be complete in all his attributes, is hard for us to understand, but this is what Scripture teaches. *God is great and can do anything but contradict himself.* God inspired his prophets to write about his appearance on earth in human form. How could he then not fulfill it? As we go on in the story, it will make sense as to why God chose to do things this way.

A FINAL CLARIFICATION

Just as some have misunderstood the term *Son of God* to mean that God had a child by a woman, so others have concluded that since Mary was the mother of Jesus, this meant that Mary was God's mother. This, of course, implies that Mary was some sort of god. Some have believed that Mary is the Queen of Heaven, whom God married resulting in the birth of Jesus. Once again, Scripture would consider this concept blasphemous to the extreme. *Nowhere is this taught in the Word of God.* Scripture is very clear. Mary was a woman who loved God and honoured his Word—but she was a mere human. She was not in any way equal with God. Yes, she was the vehicle God used to enter the world, but only that and nothing more. Mary herself was a sinner and recognized the need of a Deliverer—the need for a Saviour.

*And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my **Savior**."*

Luke 1:46-47 ESV

2 THE MESSIAH

This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

Matthew 1:18-19 NLT

According to the customs of that day, to break an engagement a divorce was required. Imagine for a moment how Joseph felt. He must have been in anguish. *Mary was pregnant and the child wasn't his. To reveal the truth publicly would label Mary for what she must be, an adulteress, unless her preposterous explanation about an angel appearing to her was right. No, that was absurd. The poor girl must be losing her mind. Joseph loved her, but he could not marry a girl who had cheated on him and was obviously trying to cover it up with an insane story. What Joseph thought about it all we don't really know, but we do know that he painfully decided to divorce her quietly.*

But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."



Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."

Matthew 1:20-23 NASB

Joseph could not have heard it any more plainly. Mary was still a virgin, and she was going to have a child! The child's name would be *Jesus*, which means "Deliverer" or "Saviour." He would *deliver* or *save* people from the consequences of their sin. The angel said that another of Jesus' names would be *Immanuel*, meaning "God with us." Jesus would be God living in human flesh among men.

The prophet Isaiah had written about this event 700 years earlier.



Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14 NASB

Joseph must have bolted upright in bed. So Isaiah had been right! It was happening just as God said it would. But what would everyone think? No matter! There was only one thing to do—he would believe God and do what he said.

And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Matthew 1:24-25 NASB

THE BIRTH

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.*

Luke 2:1 NIV

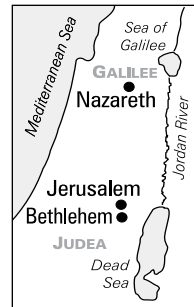
*Caesar Augustus was ruler of the Roman empire.

Caesar needed money and if the Romans got an accurate census, more people would have to pay taxes. It's doubtful that Joseph was happy. He would have to take his wife to Bethlehem which 1000 years before had been King David's ancestral home. A 120 kilometre (70 mile) trip with a wife who might give birth any day was not a welcome thought when you had to travel by donkey or on foot. Why did the Romans have to come up with this idea now? Why not take the census in Joseph's home town, Nazareth? But the Romans weren't giving people any choice. He would have to take Mary to Bethlehem.

And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:3-7 NASB



So Jesus was born in Bethlehem, far from Joseph and Mary's home. The town was so crowded that the only place where they could find lodging was in a stable. Jesus' first crib was a manger, a trough for feeding cattle. It may not have been as Joseph had planned, but as he looked at the child, he must also have sensed that everything was right. Perfectly right.

And he called his name Jesus.

Matthew 1:25 ESV

THE SHEPHERDS

*In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David **there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.** This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

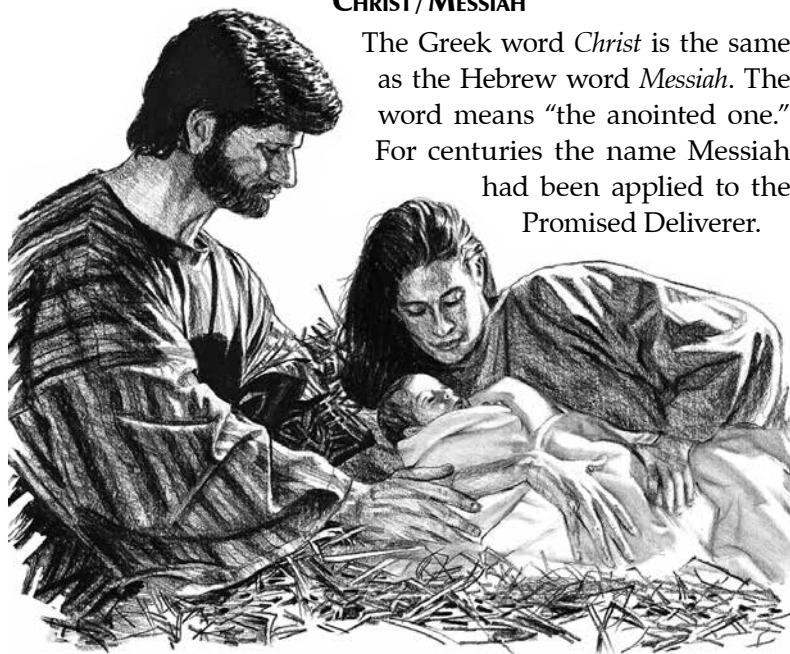
And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

Luke 2:8-14 NASB

The shepherds had been minding their own business, tending their sheep as they always had. Often sheep from their flocks were used in the Temple sacrifices in Jerusalem only a few miles north of Bethlehem. Life continued as usual. But now the angels had come and their whole world was shaken, not only by the event of the Saviour's birth, but also by his identity! The shepherds must have excitedly queried each other, "Did you hear what I heard? The Christ is the LORD!"

CHRIST/MESSIAH

The Greek word *Christ* is the same as the Hebrew word *Messiah*. The word means "the anointed one." For centuries the name Messiah had been applied to the Promised Deliverer.



Now the angels were saying that the Anointed One—the Messiah/Christ—was the LORD.² The angels had announced to the shepherds that...

...there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:11 NASB

In essence, God was having the angels announce on his behalf:

*Is it not I, the LORD?
 And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a
 Savior; There is none except Me.*
Isaiah 45:11 NASB

It is important to understand that this is the one and same God, otherwise you have confusion. Some might think that there are two Gods: a greater one and a lesser one. But Scripture says:

"I, even I, am the LORD, And there is no savior besides Me."
Isaiah 43:11 NASB

There is, and only ever has been, one Saviour.

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.
Luke 2:15-17 NASB

The shepherds were poor men, not the sort of folks that one would normally expect to be invited to the birth of a King. But there were others on their way to see Jesus as well.

WISE MEN

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2 NIV

The Magi were experts in the study of the stars, coming from Persia. They were men who were sensitive to what God was doing in the world as they, at significant expense, had travelled a great distance over mountains and deserts to see the newborn child. Such men could be expected to visit a king. The king enthroned in Judea at this time was Herod the Great who, no doubt, had been alerted to this prestigious company. They could hardly have escaped the notice of the sentries guarding Judea's borders. Their visit could not have been perceived as a threat as they were not leading an army. All they had was a question: "Where is the newborn king?"

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:3 NASB

That single question really rocked Herod. He held his authority as king in a tightly clenched fist, and he would crush anyone who dared try to wrench it from him. No doubt the whole city was a little shaken as well. Herod was known to be cruel to his citizens, especially when he was upset. Who knew what he might do. Herod called his religious advisors.

When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

Matthew 2:4 NIV

One can imagine the religious leaders being a little perplexed. Since when had Herod shown interest in religion? Nor were they expecting questions about the Messiah. It seems clear that although the Magi were aware of the momentous event occurring on earth, it escaped the notice of the Jewish leaders. But Herod was not a man to be ignored. He asked a question, "Where was the Christ to be born?"

THE PROPHECY

You can see an agitated scribe blowing dust off a small scroll. His fellow sages bend over the papyrus and scan the text. They are a little rattled. They want Herod to understand that *they* are not the ones who had said these things. A prophet by the name of Micah had written it over 700 years earlier. A shaky finger points to a well-worn part of the document. Herod disdains to look. A scribe clears his raspy throat and reads:



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

Micah 5:2 NKJV

The prophecy was very specific. It said the baby must be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah. Since there were two towns called Bethlehem, one near Nazareth and another south of Jerusalem in the region of Ephrathah, the distinction was important.

Herod wanted to see if the prophet Micah had recorded more. He had! The text clearly stated that the one to be born had lived "from everlasting." Herod must have been aghast. It couldn't be.

Only God was eternal. Perhaps the scribes were intentionally trying to alarm him, to manipulate him. It wouldn't hurt to humour them. He would show them what sort of worship new kings could expect. He shoed out his priests...

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.³

Matthew 2:7-11 NIV

God continued to guide these men.

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.

Matthew 2:12-15 NIV

Consistent with what secular history records of him, Herod did make an all-out effort to kill Jesus, but the child remained safe in Egypt. In the ancient stories, a cloud hung over Egypt. It was remembered as a place of oppression and violence. It came under God's judgment. But now something different happened. God chose Egypt to be remembered with honour as the place to which he led Mary and Joseph to find refuge for the child Jesus. Egypt became the place of safety for the special family.

Eventually Herod died and Joseph, Mary and Jesus moved back to Nazareth where Joseph worked as a carpenter.

And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40 ESV

THE WORD

Which is the better communicator—a letter or the person who wrote the letter? Letters have their place, but if you really want to get to *know* someone, nothing compares with spending time together and dialoging with that person face to face. We have seen that over the centuries, God honoured those who believed his spoken and written Word. But God didn't stop at *telling* us about himself; he went a step further. He *showed* himself to us by coming to earth.

*In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was **with God in the beginning** ... The Word **became flesh** and made his dwelling among us.*

John 1:1-2,14 NIV

What was this Word that was *with God in the beginning* and which also *became flesh*? Scripture tells us that the Word was none other than Jesus Christ. The eternal Word took the name *Jesus* (meaning “Saviour”) only after he was born on earth as a man.

Now when it says Jesus was *with God*, this does not mean that there were two Gods. Look at it this way: When we speak, we don't think of our words as being separate from ourselves. One can't open the brain and cut out the section entitled “Words.” Words are spoken or written thoughts, and in some mysterious way, we are one with our words. If someone criticizes what I say or write, they are criticizing me, not the letters on the page or the syllables in the air. Whatever my word accomplishes, whether pleasing or provoking, those words will be completely identified with me. I am the one who will be blamed or blessed for them. My words and I are one. Similarly, Jesus and God are One. Jesus is the “Word of God.”

Unsurprisingly, God, the ultimate communicator, used the best method of communication. He never planned to limit himself to paper. He came as a Person.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

John 1:14 NIV

TWO KINDS OF GREATNESS

Some folks say, “Impossible! Almighty God would never stoop so low as to be born as a helpless baby in a dirty stable. He would never become a man! God is too great for that!”

But is that accurate thinking? Perhaps we need to redefine the word *great*. Consider this:

1. There is the greatness of a king who lives in his imperial palace, surrounded by wealth and luxury and slaves to keep him comfortable. Rarely does he get his hands dirty. He knows little of the hardships and concerns faced by his subjects day after wearying day.
2. Then there is the greatness of the skilled doctor who forsakes a lucrative medical practice in his homeland to set up a clinic in a foreign country. Surrounded by disease and poverty, he serves the people of the land, helping them, healing them and finally, laying down his life for them.

Which kind of greatness do you think is most worthy of a merciful and gracious God?

3 AMONG THE SAGES

It must have been quite an experience for Joseph and Mary to raise the child Jesus. He was sinless. Perfect. Even as a youngster, he never became impatient, never talked back or threw a temper tantrum. Though many stories exist speculating about Jesus’ years growing up in Nazareth, only one of them finds its source in Scripture.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.

Luke 2:41-42 ESV

According to Jewish culture, at puberty a boy became a full member of the religious community. As such, he had all the privileges and responsibilities accorded a young man. As Joseph and Mary took the customary trip to Jerusalem, Jesus’ “coming of age” could not have been far from their minds.⁴

GOING HOME

With the feast over, everyone headed home. Though we don't know all the details of the trip, it is likely the folks from Nazareth all travelled together for company and mutual safety.

But when the feast was over, as they were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but (because they assumed that he was in their group of travelers) they went a day's journey.

Then they began to look for him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

Luke 2:43-45 NET

THE SEARCH

The search must have been frantic. They looked in all the places a normal boy might be found. The sweets section of the market was thoroughly checked and local construction sites were turned inside out to see if he had lingered to watch. In desperation Joseph and Mary retraced their steps. The last they had seen of Jesus was in the Temple.

After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Jesus were astonished at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:46-47 NET

Instead of being instructed by the Temple wise men, Jesus was doing the teaching. No, he wasn't delivering a lecture—but the penetrating questions, the profoundness of his own understanding, the depth of his answers, did not go unnoticed. Indeed, the Temple sages were hanging on to every word. Scripture says the learned men were amazed!

The learned men weren't the only ones speechless. Joseph and Mary were flabbergasted and, no doubt, much relieved. They found their tongues quick enough.

When his parents saw him, they were overwhelmed. His mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously."

Luke 2:48 NET

Jesus asked them a question:

"Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Luke 2:49 NET

A GENTLE REMINDER

This wasn't a sassy retort. Jesus was simply saying that he was right where a child should be—at home in his Father's house. But what did he mean by "Father"? Who was this Father he was referring to? We will study this more in the next section. For now, it is enough to understand that Jesus used this phrase as a gentle reminder to his earthly parents of who he really was.

His parents did not understand the remark he made to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. But his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and with people.

Luke 2:50-52 NET

4 THE PROPHET JOHN

Jesus did not officially begin his life's work until he was about 30 years of age. By then, John, the son of Zechariah, had started to prepare the way for him.

10-D
1:24

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:



"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"

Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him.

Matthew 3:1-3,5 NKJV

The prophet John was fulfilling an ancient prophecy made 700 years earlier by the prophet Isaiah. He was preparing the way for the LORD. In the same passage, Isaiah had said:



You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Isaiah 40:9 NIV

John was telling everyone who would listen that the Messiah—the Promised Deliverer—had arrived. It created quite a stir.

BAPTISM

John was being referred to as "the Baptist" because he was baptizing people. The ritual of baptism was not uncommon to the Middle Eastern people of that day. It was full of meaning. Today, however, much confusion surrounds this word.

Baptism implies “identification.” A common meaning of the word *baptizo* originated in the early Greek textile industry. In the process of dyeing fabric, a piece of cloth was plunged into a vat of dye whereby it took on the colour of the pigment. The cloth was totally identified with the dye.

John taught that the Jews had strayed from Scripture, embracing man’s ideas. He said they needed to change their minds about their wandering ways and return to God; in short, *repent*. The Jews who were baptized showed that they identified (or agreed personally) with his message of repentance.

Then people from Jerusalem, as well as all Judea and all the region around the Jordan, were going out to him, and he was baptizing them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruit that proves your repentance.”

Matthew 3:5-8 NET

REPENTANCE

John the Baptist saw that some in his audience were Pharisees and Sadducees. These two sects did not have much use for each other, but they had one thing in common—they both thought they were better than others. They were proud. John called them a “bunch of snakes” because they enforced unbearably strict rules on others, but did not practice what they preached. He told them to *repent*, to have a “change of mind.”

JESUS’ IDENTIFICATION

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John to be baptized by him in the Jordan River. But John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?”

Matthew 3:13-14 NET

John was a prophet but he recognized that Jesus was more than a prophet. Jesus did not need to repent of anything because he was perfect. John requested that Jesus baptize *him* for repentance of sins for John knew that *he* was the one who needed to be baptized, not Jesus.

So Jesus replied to him, “Let it happen now, for it is right for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John yielded to him.

Matthew 3:15 NET

Jesus insisted on being baptized because he wanted to be identified with John’s message of righteous living. He wanted to affirm John’s message as being true.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:16-17 NIV

In a moment, we will look at this verse in more depth, but first, let's finish the story.

THE LAMB OF GOD

*On the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!** This is the one about whom I said, 'After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed before me.'"*

John 1:29-30 NET

John identified Jesus as the Promised Saviour, the one who would take away the sin of the world. He said that Jesus had lived before him—eternally. John said:

"And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

John 1:34 NKJV

On one occasion, I was teaching a young couple through Scripture. Upon reading this verse, "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" the lady came alive! In an excited, animated voice she said, "The Lamb, the Lamb! Does ... does this have anything to do with all the lambs we have been reading about in the old part of the Bible?"

I told her, "Yes, it does and when the time comes, it will all fit together in a way that will make incredible sense."

A COMPLEX ONENESS

For 1000 years, the LORD had worked with Israel to bring them to a point of not trusting other gods. It had taken invasions and exile to get idolatry out of their system. Finally, Israel worshipped only one God.

But now the LORD wanted his chosen people and all the other nations to understand something more about himself, something they had not been ready for until they learned that God is one. Here it is:

It was true:

The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Deuteronomy 6:4 ESV

But that oneness is a *complex oneness*.

We use this idea all the time. For example, sometimes we talk about a university or hospital complex. We know there is only one university, but it is comprised of many buildings; there is only one hospital, but it has many units. In the same way, when we talk about God as having a “complex oneness,” we are stating that God is one, but comprised of three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In theological terms this is referred to as a *trinity* or *tri-unity*—*tri* meaning “three,” and *unity* meaning “one”—a “three in one.”

Over the preceding centuries, the prophets affirmed the plurality of God’s oneness. It was as if the LORD was talking to himself. When God created man, Moses had written:

*God said, “Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness.”*

Genesis 1:26 NKJV

When Adam sinned:

The LORD God said, “... the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:22 NET

When God dispersed the people of Babel, Moses recorded the LORD as saying:

“Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” So the LORD scattered them.

Genesis 11:7-8 NIV

Even the word the prophets used for God—*Elohim*—communicated a complex oneness. In Hebrew grammar, *Elohim* has a plural form* which allows for complexity, but the word itself is singular, meaning “one.”

*In English we have singular and plural forms. But Hebrew has singular, dual (two only) and plural (three or more) noun forms. *Elohim* is plural.

With the coming of the LORD to earth as the God-man, the LORD revealed in greater detail his “complex oneness.” We read that when the angel Gabriel talked to Mary, he said:

*“The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of the **Most High** will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the **Son of God.**”*

Luke 1:35 NASB

In one sentence, Gabriel spoke of three persons, yet one God. From this point on in Scripture, this is not uncommon. For example, we just read:

*As soon as **Jesus** was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a **voice from heaven** said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*

Matthew 3:16-17 NIV

We have three entities here: *Jesus*, the *Spirit of God* and a *voice from heaven*, but together they form a tri-unity—one “complex” God whose personal name is YAHWEH—the LORD.

A complex oneness is easy to understand when talking about a university or hospital, but when applied to a being such as God, one’s mind goes numb. Over the years, various attempts have been made to explain God’s tri-oneness:

1. **Water:** It comes in three forms: liquid, steam or ice. Yet all three are water.
2. **Dimensions:** A box has height, width and length; though not the same, they cannot be separated.
3. **Multiplication:** $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$
4. **The Sun:** Consists of a visible heavenly body, invisible light rays and warming heat rays—three distinct elements, yet one sun.

Continued on next page

Although some of these illustrations may be helpful, they still fall far short of giving us a full understanding. We need to be careful that we don't try to drag God down to our level and view him as one like ourselves. The LORD says part of the reason we don't understand him is because ...

You thought that I was just like you.

Psalm 50:21 NASB

As children, there were many things we didn't understand and yet we accepted them at face value. "What is electricity? Why doesn't it run out onto the floor when I pull the plug out of the socket? I can't see it. What do you mean it will hurt me if I stick tweezers into the outlet?" Just because we failed to understand electricity didn't make it any less real.

As adults, we are somewhat smug in our ability to comprehend the world about us. Over the centuries, things that puzzled the ancients have become commonplace in our understanding. Yet, we need to be humble. Much of the known universe still contains great mysteries. People living 100 years from now may look back on us as being blind to what they will consider obvious. The time may come when the concept of a Trinity will make perfect sense.

Even if that day does come, we need to recognize that our limited ability to reason cannot fit an infinite God into our finite minds. Rightly understood, God, as revealed in the Scriptures of the Bible, is a God who leaves us astonished. There are things about the LORD that are beyond our scope of reason; incredible complexities that are difficult for us to fathom. The whole concept of an eternal God is not easy to digest. Trying to conceptualize a God who is everywhere at the same time is baffling. Getting a solid handle on just these two truths is impossible for our finite minds to comprehend. It's no different with the complex oneness of God.

The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us.

Deuteronomy 29:29 KJV

What the Bible does not teach:

- ❖ **Tri-theism:** Believed by the ancient Egyptians. They grouped their gods in triads—three gods in a cluster. Usually they were a family: Osiris the father, Isis the mother, Horus the son. Today, a badly misunderstood interpretation of the Trinity places God as father, Mary, the Queen of Heaven, as mother and Jesus as son. This idea is not taught in the Word of God.
- ❖ **Modalism:** Three roles are played by one person, such as a man being known as a son, husband and father.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

- 1** **T**EMPTED
- 2** **P**OWER AND **F**AME
- 3** **N**ICODEMUS
- 4** **R**EJECTION
- 5** **T**HE **B**BREAD OF **L**LIFE

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/11.html



1 TEMPTED

At the beginning of creation, Lucifer defiantly rebelled against God, grasping after his position. Now God the Son,* though still fully God, had set aside all his visible glory and majesty to leave

*See pages 165-167 for an explanation of the term, *Son of God*.

Heaven and come to earth as a human being. Jesus must have appeared very vulnerable to Satan. If he could only entice Jesus to do his bidding, it would be a great victory. From God's perspective, it was time to reveal something more about himself.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*

*Devil means "false accuser, slanderer."

Matthew 4:1-2 ESV

Jesus had just completed a lengthy time without food.

And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

Matthew 4:3 ESV

A SUGGESTION

Satan was suggesting that Jesus do something everyone would understand, namely, take care of his physical well-being. It also seemed like a prime opportunity for Jesus to prove who he really was. If he was God, then he had created the world simply by speaking it into existence. To turn stones into bread would be a simple matter. But there was a catch. To do so, he would be following Satan's orders.

But [Jesus] answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:4 ESV

JESUS QUOTES THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Christ responded to Satan by quoting Scripture, God's written Word. He said that it was more important to follow God than to take care of physical needs. This is a significant statement, as many people are so concerned about this physical life that they ignore their spiritual well-being.

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

Mark 8:36 NKJV

11-A
0:34

SATAN “QUOTES”

Then the devil took him to the holy city [or Jerusalem] and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

Matthew 4:5-6 NIV

Now the challenge was brazen. “Prove it! Prove that you are God’s Son! If God is truly your Father, then he will save you.”

Satan was quoting a passage found in the book of Psalms. Satan loves religion and quoting Scripture is a favourite trick of his. The problem was that Satan was not quoting Scripture accurately. He was selecting only the portion that suited his purposes. He had done this with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and now he was trying it on Jesus.

JESUS QUOTES SCRIPTURE

Once again, Jesus answered Satan’s temptation by quoting Scripture, only he quoted it correctly.

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Matthew 4:7 ESV

11-B
0:36

AN OFFER RESISTED

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

Matthew 4:8-9 ESV

Satan was offering Jesus the nations of the world, if Jesus would only worship him. After all, wasn’t that what Jesus wanted—for people to follow him? What Satan did not mention was that if Jesus worshipped him, then Jesus would also be serving him. Worship and service always go together. You can’t divide the two. But Satan’s ploy didn’t work. Again Jesus quoted Scripture:

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Matthew 4:10-11 NIV

Satan had not succeeded in entrapping Jesus in his treacherous web of deceit. Jesus was above reproach, uncompromising in his

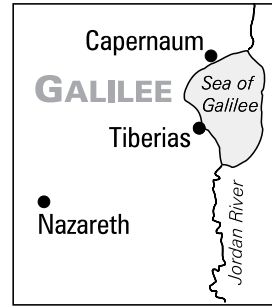
Satan means
“adversary”
or “enemy.”

resistance to temptation. The Devil retreated temporarily, still determined to destroy Jesus.

From Satan's perspective, he did have a measure of success: John the Baptist had been thrown into jail.¹

Now when Jesus heard that John had been imprisoned, he went into Galilee ... he moved from Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum by the sea.

Matthew 4:12-13 NET



SINLESS

The struggle between good and evil is not a balanced one. Jesus, the Creator God, is far more powerful than Satan, a created being. Though Jesus was tempted, he did not give in to temptation. He was perfect.

True and false prophets have come and gone, but none have claimed to be sinless. Scripture records the lives of many people who were either revealed as sinners, or confessed their sinfulness. But Jesus never did. You will search Scripture in vain looking for one reference where Jesus sinned or asked for forgiveness. Even those who were closest to him and most likely to know of any character flaws wrote that Jesus ...

... committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth.

1 Peter 2:22 NKJV

Jesus' temptation was just one more way in which he identified with humanity. When God finally judges all mankind, no one will be able to stand before him and say, "Lord, you don't understand! You were born in a palace; I in dirt. You were never tempted; I was. How can you judge me when you never faced what I faced?" No, the Bible says we don't have a God ...

... who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

Hebrews 4:15 NIV

2 POWER AND FAME

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:14-15 NIV

Since Israel had failed as a nation to be a light displaying God’s relationship to mankind, Jesus came offering a new kingdom. He was not offering a political empire based on laws written in stone and impossible to keep, but a spiritual kingdom available to all, written in men’s hearts and empowered by God.

He was telling people to repent. Repentance—that change of mind—was something that happened inwardly, and the heart was the place where Christ intended to begin his rule.

As he went along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen). Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people.”

They left their nets immediately and followed him. Going on a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother in their boat mending nets. Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Mark 1:16-20 NET

AUTHORITY

Then they went to Capernaum. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people there were amazed by his teaching, because he taught them like one who had authority, not like the experts in the law. Mark 1:21-22 NET

11-D
1:24

Those who heard Jesus knew there was something very unusual about him. His teaching commanded attention, and no wonder; they were listening to God himself. But Jesus not only spoke with authority, he also demonstrated it.

Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “Leave us alone Jesus the Nazarene! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

Mark 1:23-24 NET

This was a case of demon possession. One of Satan’s angels was living inside this man, with the man’s consent. The demon knew who Jesus was, calling him the Holy One of God!

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!”

Mark 1:25 NKJV

Because demons always twist the truth for their own purposes, Jesus did not want them telling others who he was. Christ himself validated that he was the Deliverer by ordering the demon out.

Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.

They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

Mark 1:26-28 NASB

Jesus' incredible power must have made headline news in the local gossip sessions and this was only the beginning!

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

Mark 1:40-42 NIV

Scripture says Jesus healed all kinds of nasty ailments where the person was obviously ill or severely crippled. No man was ever sent away because his disease was incurable. He even raised the dead!

Jesus wasn't putting on a show for the entertainment of the local populace. Jesus not only felt genuine compassion for the people he helped, but he was also establishing that both he and his message were from Heaven. No, he didn't need a horse, a chariot, or an army. All he needed to do was *speak*. He was the Word, the Promised Saviour of whom all the prophets wrote.

DEMONS

Jesus had complete control over all creation, including the created spirit beings. Scripture tells us:

By Him all things were created, both in heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things.

Colossians 1:16-17 NASB

If a person fears the spirit realm, then he needs to know that Jesus Christ came to set him free of that fear. We will see just how Jesus does that later in the book.

3 NICODEMUS

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

**Rabbi is the name for a Jewish religious teacher. To call a person "Rabbi" implied respect.*

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:1-3 NASB

Nicodemus was a man of status. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council that advised the Romans. As a Pharisee, he kept Moses' Law meticulously. As a Jew, Nicodemus considered himself part of the chosen race. Nicodemus had a privileged ancestry; everything about his birth seemed ideal. But Jesus found fault with it and said, "You must be born again." How was it possible to be born again?

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

John 3:4-7 NASB

Jesus wasn't talking about Nicodemus' birth as an infant, when he was born of water or born of the flesh. The second birth was about a spiritual birth, a spiritual beginning. To go to Heaven you not only needed a physical birth, but you also needed to be born a second time with a spiritual birth. But how could one be born spiritually? Jesus continued:

"Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

John 3:14-15 NET

Jesus was saying that to be born again, Nicodemus must be like the people of Moses' day. He must first recognize that he was a sinner. Then he needed to have a "change of mind" about thinking that his birth and status would make him acceptable with God,

and instead trust Jesus who came from Heaven to provide a way of acceptance. If Nicodemus would put his faith in the LORD Jesus, then God said that he would provide Nicodemus with eternal life.

FAITH AND TRUST

The word *believe* in this context implies more than intellectual assent. An Israelite could have acknowledged that looking at Moses' bronze serpent would heal him, but if he did not demonstrate faith in God by actually *looking* at the pole, then he would have died. The biblical meaning of the word includes an act of the will and is synonymous with faith and trust.

The *object* of one's faith is also important—it's critical! A number of years ago, someone with a twisted mind placed deadly poison in the capsules of a pain reliever. Subsequently several people, sincerely believing the medicine to be what was advertised, took the medication and died. They were honestly trusting, but inadvertently trusting in the wrong thing.

A man might sincerely believe that a false god could save him from his sin, but sincerity based on an erroneous belief is deadly. However, if the object of his faith is almighty God, such trust will have a very different effect since, as we have already seen, God keeps his Word.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16 ESV

EVERLASTING LIFE

Jesus was promising eternal life to *whomever* believes in him! The angel had instructed Mary and Joseph to name their son Jesus because that name meant "Deliverer" or "Saviour." And now Jesus was saying he would deliver man from the consequence of sin—eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire.

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him."

John 3:17 NET

Jesus had not come to earth to judge it. Rather, he had come to save the world from all the tragedy that sin, Satan and death had brought.

"The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God."

John 3:18 NET

NO MIDDLE GROUND

Jesus said that those who put their faith in him would not be judged as sinners. But those who did not trust in him were already under judgment. There was no middle ground; you couldn't get around it. One could not say, "I'll think about it," and comfortably remain in a neutral zone. One either chose to believe or remained an unbeliever. To make no choice was, in effect, to make a choice.

Also, there was no need to wait until death to find out one's eternal destiny. Jesus was stating it in black and white terms. A man was under judgment, bound for the Lake of Fire, until he put his trust in Jesus to deliver him. Then he would have eternal life. This was the promise Jesus was making.

"I tell you the ... truth, the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; but has crossed over from death to life."

John 5:24 NET

Jesus wasn't ignoring the judgment of sin. He knew that many would choose not to trust in him.

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

John 3:19-20 NASB

Jesus was talking about spiritual light versus spiritual darkness. He said that many hate the light because light exposes sin. People don't like being revealed as sinners. They'd rather hide or blame their sin on someone else, just as Adam and Eve did. Scripture says such people prefer darkness. But what is this "light"?

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "**I am the light of the world.**"*

John 8:12 NKJV

At the time of creation, God made light so we could see our way along a physical path. Now he had come to earth to be the light for our spiritual path.

"Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12 ESV



4 REJECTION

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.

Mark 2:1–3 NIV

This was a familiar scenario wherever Jesus went. As soon as he put in an appearance, the sick and lame began to arrive. In this case, four men brought a paralyzed friend.

Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

Mark 2:4 NIV

The houses were typically flat-roofed. Stairs led to the top, making it a cool place to relax in the evening. When the four men could not get close to Jesus, they went up on the roof, tore it open and lowered the paralyzed man down in front of Jesus. Making an opening in the roof must have been quite an ordeal. You can imagine the dust and chunks of packed earth that rained down on those inside. Of course, Jesus' lesson was interrupted. Everyone stared at the ceiling, wondering what was going on. As the faces of the determined men came into view, probably Jesus' audience took to yelling and carrying on: "For crying out loud! What are you doing? You're wrecking the house!" But Jesus saw something different.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Mark 2:5 NET

THE HEART

Jesus was first concerned about the inward man, the heart. It was no problem for him to forgive sin, but some of his audience had trouble accepting that fact. Though they didn't say anything out loud, their thoughts were hostile.

Now some of the experts in the law were sitting there, turning these things over in their minds: "Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Mark 2:6–7 NET

They were right—only God can forgive sin!

Now immediately, when Jesus realized in his spirit that they were contemplating such thoughts, he said to them, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts?"

Mark 2:8 NET

Jesus knew what they were reasoning and he told them so. You can imagine the scribes' mortification. They probably reeled back in their minds trying to remember what they had been thinking during the last ten minutes. One thing was certain—Jesus could read their thoughts! But Jesus wasn't trying to impress them. He had a question:

"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic,

[1.] 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say,

[2.] 'Stand up, take your stretcher, and walk?'"

Mark 2:9 NET

A lawyer could not have framed a more difficult question. You can see the scribes trying to grasp the inevitable conclusions. *"The man was obviously paralyzed. To restore the crippled limbs to use was impossible. Only God could heal such an infirmity. But if Jesus could give life to withered limbs, then that meant he was ... no, that was unthinkable. God would never come to earth and live a life like Jesus did. He was a nobody, living on the dusty outskirts of the empire. The audacity to ask such a loaded question! Who did he think he was anyway? God?"* Jesus answered their query without them asking:

"But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"—he said to the paralytic—"I tell you, stand up, take your stretcher, and go home." And immediately the man stood up, took his stretcher, and went out in front of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Mark 2:10-12 NET

The purpose of the miracles was not for entertainment. The miracles authenticated who Jesus said he was.

HELPLESS SINNERS

And He went out again by the seashore ... As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

Mark 2:13-14 NASB

Though Levi was a Jew, he worked as a tax collector for the Romans. These money-grubbers gained their shekels from a hidden surcharge on the tax, and often grossly overcharged the people in order to comfortably line their own pockets. They were hated for their corrupt power and for their willingness to work

as bloodsuckers for the Romans. Nevertheless, as Jesus passed the tax office, he invited Levi to follow him.

And it happened that He was reclining at the table in [Levi's] house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.

When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?"

And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Mark 2:15-17 NASB

Jesus could only help those who recognized their own sinfulness. That has always been the first step to acceptance with God.

WORKING ON THE SABBATH

Jesus' constant rebukes must have been galling to the Pharisees. They were losing face. Hoping to catch Jesus in some act of blatant sin, they began to keep a close eye on him.

Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Mark 3:1-2 NIV

According to the Law, no one was to work on the Sabbath. To do such work was to break God's Law and that would be sin. In the Pharisees' minds, "work" included such things as performing the service of a doctor. The Law didn't say it was wrong to heal on this day, but the Pharisees had encircled the Ten Commandments with their own list of rules, and those precepts had taken on the authority of Scripture. So they watched to see if Jesus would heal the man, if he would work on the Sabbath. But Jesus was fully aware of the purpose for which God had given the Law. Knowing the Pharisees' scheme to entrap him, Christ could have avoided a confrontation but he didn't back off.



Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." Mark 3:3 NIV

You can see Jesus slowly turn and gaze at those who had plotted to accuse him. The moment is frozen.

▶ 11-F
0:56

Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”

Mark 3:4 NIV

There he went again, asking loaded questions! The Pharisees were outraged, seething with anger and resentment. As the religious answer men, their credibility was being tarnished.

But they remained silent.

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

Mark 3:4-5 NIV

Jesus had done it. He had worked on the Sabbath! The Pharisees had caught him in the act.

Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Mark 3:6 NIV

Normally such an alliance would have been unthinkable. The Herodians were a political party that supported the rule of Herod and the Romans. On the other hand, the Pharisees despised the Romans—but they hated Jesus even more. If they were going to kill him, they would need Rome’s help.

The religious leaders had rejected Jesus. As far as they were concerned, he could not be the Promised Deliverer.

11-G
1:28

THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him...

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles...

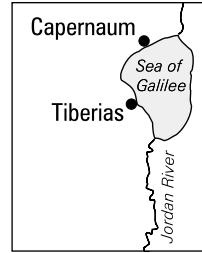
Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Mark 3:7-8,13-19 NIV

From those who followed him, Jesus selected 12 disciples with whom he would spend extra time. They were a mixed lot comprised of a Rome-employed tax collector on one end of the social spectrum and on the other end, a zealot pledged to overthrow the Romans. Among the remaining were an assortment of fishermen. Regardless of their background, these 12 were all committed to following Jesus through thick and thin. That is, all but one.

5 THE BREAD OF LIFE

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.



Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"

John 6:1-5 ESV

Jesus was asking questions again.

He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip answered him, "...[eight months wages] would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"

John 6:6-9 ESV

Like a small boy hinting to his father, you can't help wondering if Andrew was hoping that Jesus could do something.

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." (Now there was a lot of grass in that place.) So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed the bread to those who were seated. He then did the same with the fish, as much as they wanted.

John 6:10-11 NET

The biblical account is stated so matter-of-factly that you almost miss what happened. Jesus divided the bread and fish among his 12 disciples, and they distributed it to 5000 men—the women and children would have been in addition to this number. This was reproduction of an unheard of magnitude, and Jesus wasn't being miserly. They had enough leftovers for each disciple to take a basketful home.

Now when the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus performed, they began to say to one another, "This is certainly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

John 6:14 NET

The men who had benefitted from this miracle were so impressed they decided they would forcibly install Jesus as their king.

But Jesus wasn't interested in starting an earthly kingdom, though there would be a time for that in the future. For now, he was seeking to rule people's hearts.

Then Jesus, because he knew they were going to come and seize him by force to make him king, withdrew again up the mountainside alone.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

Jesus replied, "I tell you the solemn truth, you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate all the loaves of bread you wanted."

John 6:15,25-26 NET

Well, there you have it. Jesus could see that the people only wanted him to be king so they could get free food. They weren't interested in the fact that these miracles revealed he was the Promised Saviour. Jesus said:

"Do not work for food that disappears, but for food that remains to eternal life—the food which the Son of Man will give to you. For God the Father has put his seal of approval on him."

John 6:27 NET

The food they ate could only sustain life for a moment. Sooner or later, they would all die. Therefore, Jesus said their all-consuming goal in life should be to pursue that which would give them eternal life.

So then they said to him, "What must we do to accomplish the deeds God requires?"

Jesus replied, "This is the deed God requires—to believe in the one whom he sent."

John 6:28-29 NET

The people wanted to know what sort of work they would have to do to earn everlasting life. Jesus said that they only needed to *believe*; they only needed to trust in him to be their Saviour. That was all. It seemed so simple.

So they said to him, "Then what miraculous sign will you perform, so that we may see it and believe you?"

John 6:30 NET

What was that? They were asking Jesus for a sign to prove he was the One of whom all the prophets wrote, as if feeding the 5000 with a boy's lunch wasn't enough! The people continued pressuring Jesus for food.

"Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

John 6:31 NKJV

In other words, "Jesus, why don't you do the same?" They refused to see that this One who had just provided bread in this deserted place was also the same One who had provided bread for their forefathers in the desert. The fact that Jesus desired to give them eternal life was lost in their desire for an easy meal. Tragically, they were not interested in spiritual truth.

Then Jesus told them, "I tell you the... truth... my Father is giving you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread all the time."

*Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life.** The one who comes to me will never go hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

John 6:32-35 NET



11-I
0:58

CHAPTER TWELVE

- 1** FILTHY RAGS
- 2** THE WAY
- 3** THE PLAN
- 4** LAZARUS
- 5** HELL
- 6** ACCEPTANCE AND BETRAYAL

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/12.html



1 FILTHY RAGS

Jesus was a master storyteller, often using parables to make a point. A parable is a story that contains one simple message. In this case, he directed the story to those who thought they were right with God because they trusted in themselves.

He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector."

Luke 18:9-10 NKJV

In the Jewish culture of that day, Pharisees were viewed as meticulous keepers of Moses' Law. In contrast, tax collectors were considered to be crooks. Now here were two people from opposite ends of the moral spectrum, praying in the same place.

THE PHARISEE

"The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'"*

Luke 18:11-12 ESV

*His fasting (going without food) was presumably for giving time to prayer. He also gave a tenth of his income to a charitable cause.

In patting himself on the back, the Pharisee mentioned things that he did or did not do. His list could have been lengthy. But that didn't matter. The *way* he prayed showed the attitude of his heart. He was relying on his own right living (or good works) to make himself righteous before God. What he missed was that God's standard demands perfection.

THE TAX COLLECTOR

"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'"

Luke 18:13 ESV

The tax collector was overwhelmed by the awareness that he was a sinner and desperately needed God's help. He begged God for mercy, asking him to provide a way to escape the punishment he deserved for his sin. Jesus continued:

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Luke 18:14 ESV

*Justified means "to be declared righteous."

REPENTANCE

It is interesting that Jesus tied repentance to humility. Scripture makes it clear that pride is what caused Satan to fall. It is also pride which keeps man from admitting he is a sinner, needing to trust God. The Pharisee was convinced that if he was diligent in observing all the Law and performing good deeds, God would be pleased. He was proud to the point of being blind to his own need. Jesus said:

“Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.”

Mark 7:6–8 NIV

12-A
1:24

Outwardly, the Pharisees went through the motions of appearing righteous, but inwardly, they were sinful. They also undercut the intent of the Ten Commandments by adding their own man-made rules. Jesus said:

“Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.”

Mark 7:13 NET

The Pharisees believed that their religious observances, their good works and their Jewish birth would make them right with God. Jesus said these things do nothing to make a person acceptable, because evil...

...come[s] from within, and [defiles] a person.

Mark 7:23 ESV

Scripture is clear on this point: good deeds do not earn a right standing with God. It says:

All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

Isaiah 64:6 NIV

Sometimes folks view themselves as models of perfection, but Scripture states quite the opposite. It says that all people...

...are slaves to sin, which leads to death.

Romans 6:16 NIV

Sin has wrapped its chains around the life of every human.

“I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin.”

John 8:34 NLT

We often get frustrated because the harder we try to do what is right, the more we seem to fail. Just as we get one area of life under control, we find ourselves falling short in another. In every way, the sin nature works against our efforts to live right.

In addition, the Word of God speaks of Satan making man his slave. This doesn't necessarily mean that a person has been dabbling in the occult; rather, the Devil manipulates man by temptation and pride to accomplish his ends. Indeed, Satan works very hard to convince man that he is inherently good. Scripture says that people need to ...

*... come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil,
who has taken them captive to do his will.* 2 Timothy 2:26 NIV

Just because man is a slave to sin and Satan, does not justify a devilish lifestyle. God still holds everyone responsible for the choices they make. But being slaves does create a dilemma. The perfection man needs to enter the presence of a perfect God is far beyond man's capability to achieve.

The age-old question asked by the prophet Job still remains:

How can a man be righteous before God? Job 9:2 NKJV

*How can we get rid of our sin and gain **a righteousness equal to God's righteousness** so we can be accepted in his presence?*

▶ 12-B
1:11

I WAS BORN A CHRISTIAN ...

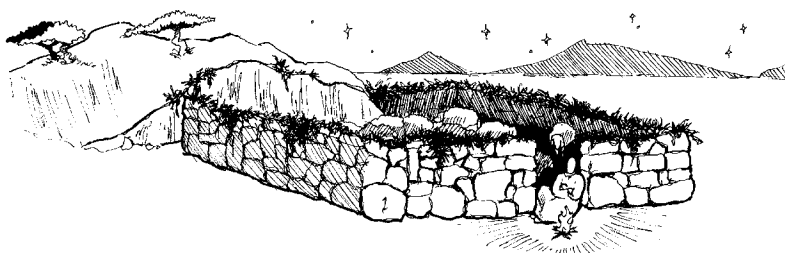
The word *Christian* implies "Christ-one" or "belonging to the household of Christ." The biblical meaning has been distorted and confused beyond belief. But even in the original sense of the word, to say that one has been "born a Christian" is not accurate. Being born in a Christian home no more makes you a Christian than being born in a hospital makes you a doctor. Physical birth has nothing to do with our relationship with God or our future destiny.

Though the term is used of entire nations, rightly understood it can only apply to an individual. Some supposedly "Christian nations" have perpetrated terrible crimes in the name of Christ. Others are morally corrupt.

2 THE WAY

12-C
1:09

Jesus often used common day-to-day experiences to illustrate spiritual truth. In this story, Jesus began by reminding his listeners of the sort of pen in which sheep were kept. The enclosure was constructed using stones upon which thorny vines were encouraged to grow. The purpose of these brambles was to deter wild animals or thieves from crawling over the wall. The pen had only one entrance.



During the day the shepherd would lead his flock out to the pasture for grazing. At night the flock would be returned to the fold and the shepherd would sleep in the entrance. No one could enter nor could the sheep leave without disturbing the guardian. The shepherd's body literally became the door to the pen.

Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep."

John 10:7 NIV

Jesus described those who trust him as being like sheep, safely secured in the sheep pen.



"Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved."

John 10:9 NLT

Jesus said he alone was the gate—there were no other doors. It was only through him that one could be saved from the terrible consequences of sin. It was only through him that one could have eternal life.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10 ESV

Thieves do not care about the welfare of sheep. Scripture calls them *false teachers*. Often they misuse the Word of God to feed a power trip or thicken their wallets. These thieves fabricate a way to earn eternal life—a way that appears good, but still ends in spiritual death.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12 NIV

On the other hand, Jesus came to give a full life to those who trust in him, a life abundant with joy. Jesus said:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6 NKJV

Jesus said: He is the only *way* to God.
 His Word is the only *truth*.
 Eternal *life* can only be found in Him.

Jesus emphasized that no one can come to God any other way. Just as the shepherd was the only gate to the sheepfold, so Jesus is the only way to God.

3 THE PLAN

As you study the life of Jesus, you see that little by little he revealed to his disciples the plan and purpose behind his coming to planet earth.

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up [to life] on the third day. Matthew 16:21 NASB

Jesus did something that is humanly impossible. He foretold how, when, where and why he would die. He also described some of the events leading up to that death. Peter, one of the disciples, didn't like what he was hearing.

Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” Matthew 16:22 NASB

In many ways, Peter was like some people today. They deny that such an event could ever have happened to Jesus, if he was truly God. But Jesus had some strong words for Peter:

But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Matthew 16:23 NASB

Jesus told Peter he was playing into the hands of Satan. He said that Peter did not understand God's agenda, whereby he must ...

... be killed, and be raised up [to life] on the third day.

Matthew 16:21 NASB

But why was Jesus saying this? We will understand more as we go along.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

One week after Jesus told his disciples about his plan, he took three of them up a mountain to give them a glimpse of who he really was.

Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

Matthew 17:1-2 NASB

Jesus' outward appearance was transformed—his face shone like the sun and his clothes radiated a sparkling white light. The same awesome, dazzling pure light of God's presence that had filled the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle was made apparent to the disciples. It had been there all along—in Jesus—but they could not see it.

Two men were talking with [Jesus], Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Luke 9:30-31 ESV

Peter was astounded by it all. It seems he began babbling about whatever ideas filled his head.

And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Matthew 17:4-5 ESV

God the Father spoke from Heaven.

When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus ... as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

Matthew 17:6-9 ESV

What a stupendous event! At that time, the disciples didn't know what to make of it all, but later Peter would write:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain! 2 Peter 1:16-18 NIV

4 LAZARUS

▶ 12-D
0:58

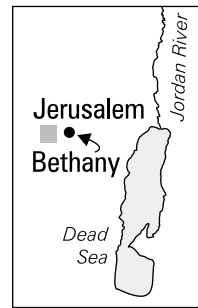
Now a certain man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived... So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord... the one you love is sick."

John 11:1,3 NET

Lazarus, Mary and Martha, close friends of Jesus, lived a couple of miles from Jerusalem. At the time of this event, Jesus was on the other side of the Jordan River, a full day's journey from Bethany.

(Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.)... when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he remained in the place where he was for two more days.

John 11:5-6 NET



From a purely human point of view, this made no sense. In this day of quick-response rescue teams, everyone knows that when someone is seriously ill, delays can be fatal. But Jesus stayed where he was for another two days! What was he thinking?

Then... he said to his disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

The disciples replied, "Rabbi, the Jewish leaders were just now trying to stone you to death! Are you going there again?"

Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and I am glad for your sake that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

John 11:7-8,14 NET

DEAD FOUR DAYS

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days already. (Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, so many of the Jewish people of the region had come to Martha and Mary to console them over the loss of their

brother.) So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will grant you." *John 11:17-22 NET*

We are not told what Martha thought Jesus might ask God for, but one thing is abundantly clear—she had faith in him.

Jesus replied, "Your brother will come back to life again."

Martha said, "I know he will come back to life again in the resurrection at the last day." *John 11:23-24 NET*

Martha wasn't surprised at Jesus' statement. She knew from Scripture that all people will come back to life at the end of the world when everyone will be judged by God. Until then, a person only dies once.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" *John 11:25-26 NASB*

These were potent words. Jesus told Martha that Lazarus did not have to wait until the day of judgment to be raised back to life. Jesus was the one who gave life and therefore had the power to restore life to Lazarus at any moment. Did she believe him?

"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." *John 11:27 NIV*

Martha not only believed Jesus; she also affirmed that he was the Christ—the Messiah.

And He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

Jesus wept. *John 11:34-35 NKJV*

There has been much speculation about why Jesus cried. Maybe it was simply because he felt the grief of those around him. Perhaps he wept as he witnessed the ravages that sin had brought into the perfect world which he had created. Some have conjectured that Jesus grieved at the thought of bringing Lazarus back to life—back from all the joy and perfection of Heaven—back to the earth with all its sin and sorrow. Perhaps it was for all these reasons and more. Scripture doesn't tell us why, but the fact that he wept does show us that the sinless LORD Jesus experienced human feelings.

So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

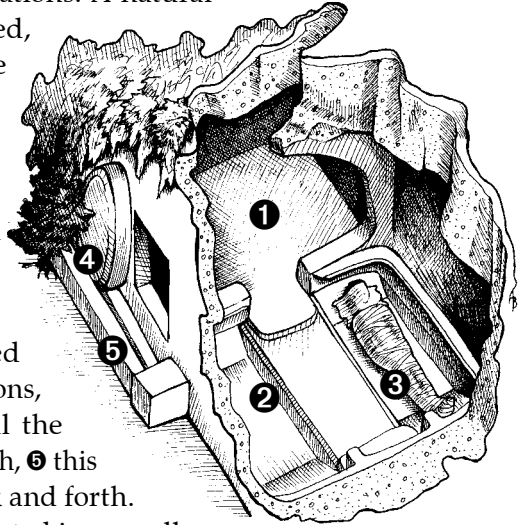
Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

John 11:36-38 ESV

The traditional Jewish burial of the day often involved placing the body in a tomb which, over time, became the last resting place of successive generations. A natural

cave was commonly used, though sometimes the sepulcher was hewn out of solid rock. These tombs were large; you could stand upright in the weeping chamber. ❶ Inside, shelves were carved on which to lay the bodies. ❷ A wheel-shaped rock ❸ weighing several tons, was hewn to tightly seal the entrance. Resting in a trench, ❹ this door could be rolled back and forth.

When closed, the door rested in a small hollow in front of the entrance, preventing the stone from rolling open.



12-E
1:14

Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, replied, "Lord, by this time the body will have a bad smell, because he has been buried four days."

Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone. Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you that you have listened to me. I knew that you always listen to me, but I said this for the sake of the crowd standing around here, that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The one who had died came out, his feet and hands tied up with strips of cloth, and a cloth wrapped around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go." John 11:39-44 NET

It was a good thing that Jesus said "Lazarus..." Perhaps if he had simply said "Come out!" the whole cemetery would have emptied its dead. Lazarus was alive! His friends had to unwind the long

strips of burial clothes before Lazarus could walk away. There was no doubt that Jesus had performed a tremendous miracle.

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

John 11:45-48,53 ESV

Some believed, but others plotted. Not even a resurrection could convince the chief priests and Pharisees. They had too much at stake: their power and their pride.

WHAT KIND OF A MAN IS THIS?

Jesus left no doubt as to who he was. On one occasion, the disciples found themselves in a storm at sea. Though Jesus was on board, he was sound asleep. On being awakened and told of the peril they were in, Jesus ...

...got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" *Matthew 8:26-27 NASB*

Just as God spoke the waters into existence when he created the world, so Jesus calmed them by his word. And just as God created life in the beginning by speaking, so Jesus was able to restore life at his command. He said:

"I am the resurrection and the life."

John 11:25 NASB

5 HELL

For three years Jesus taught all who would listen. It seems an incredibly brief span of time considering everything that happened. His teaching ranged from comforting to provoking, from parables to accounts of real people. On this occasion, Jesus related the following true story:

"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate

was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table ... even the dogs came and licked his sores."

Luke 16:19-21 ESV

THE BEGGAR DIES

"The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side."

Luke 16:22 ESV

In this story, "Abraham's side" is equivalent to Heaven and is sometimes referred to as Paradise. The man in question here was a different person than the Lazarus in the last story. This Lazarus went to Paradise, not because he was poor, but because he trusted the LORD.

THE RICH MAN DIES

"The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades [Hell], being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'"

Luke 16:22-24 ESV

The rich man had gone to Hell, not because he was wealthy, but because he ignored God's Word and lived only for himself while on earth. He begged Abraham for help.

"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'"

Luke 16:25-26 ESV

It's FINAL

The Word of God makes it clear that one can only repent—have a change of mind—while here on earth. After a person dies, there is no second chance, no opportunity to escape Hell and go to Heaven. Those who die and are not in a right relationship with God remain separated from him forever. Nowhere does Scripture suggest that one can escape this place of suffering. Even though the rich man cried out for a measure of relief from his torment and misery, there was none. Mercy can only be received during this lifetime. The rich man continued:

"Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

Luke 16:27-28 ESV

Even though this man was in terrible agony, he could remember his life on earth. He knew that his five brothers were not right with God and wanted them to be warned.

“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’”

“And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Luke 16:29-31 ESV

Earlier on, we read of one whom Jesus raised from the dead. Yet in spite of this great demonstration of power, many still would not accept Jesus as their Saviour and King. Instead, they plotted to kill him. Scripture says that if people refuse to believe the message of salvation proclaimed by God’s prophets, then ...

“...neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”

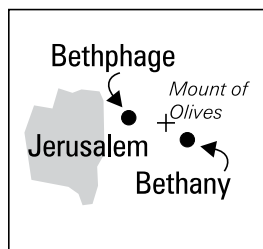
Luke 16:31 ESV

The description of Hell is almost synonymous with that of the Lake of Fire.¹ The Bible says that those who enter Hell have already entered everlasting punishment.

6 ACCEPTANCE AND BETRAYAL

Now as they approached Jerusalem, near Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go to the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here.”

Mark 11:1-2 NET



Then they brought the colt to Jesus, threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. Many spread their cloaks on the road and others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Both those who went ahead and those who followed kept shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

Mark 11:7-10 NET

The word *hosanna* means “save now.” The crowd was giving Jesus an impromptu version of a Roman parade normally used to welcome a triumphant conqueror. They were applauding and praising him in hopes that he would oust their Roman oppressors.

Unbeknown to them, they were fulfilling a 500-year-old prophecy. The prophet Zechariah had written that Jesus would receive just such a welcome.



Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9 NIV

This is the only time Jesus ever allowed such a momentous reception on his behalf. He had a reason: Jesus was forcing the hand of those who were out to kill him. He wanted them to act now, without delay.

It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. “But not during the Passover celebration,” they agreed, “or the people may riot.”

Mark 14:1-2 NLT

From the perspective of the shouting crowd, it was time for Jesus to announce that he was the true King of Israel. But for the religious leaders who were plotting his death, it was an awkward situation. If Jesus needed to be put off the stage, now was the time, but they were afraid of the public reaction. Jesus was obviously very popular.

The city was crammed with people for the Passover, many of whom were expectantly watching Jesus in the hope he would evict the Romans. But as the hours passed with no official proclamation of his kingship, his hero status was fast fading.

THE PASSOVER MEAL

Jesus asked two disciples to arrange a room for the Passover.

When it was evening He came with the twelve. As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me.”

They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, “Surely not I?”

And He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.”

Mark 14:17-20 NASB

When Jesus chose his 12 disciples three years earlier, he knew that one was a traitor.

One thousand years before this time, the prophet David, in speaking of this betrayal, had written from the Saviour's perspective:



*"Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me."*

Psalm 41:9 NASB

BETRAYED

The traitor was Judas Iscariot. Though he was treasurer for the disciples, he was also a thief. Apparently, he oiled his ambitions and lined his pockets without the disciples being any the wiser. But Jesus knew, and apparently Satan knew it too. He had been watching for a weak link in Jesus' armour, a time and place to crush the Promised Saviour forever. Now Satan saw his opportunity. Judas was willing. As the Passover bread was being served, the Devil made his move.

And after Judas took the piece of bread, Satan entered into him.

Jesus said to him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." (Now none of those present at the table understood why Jesus said this to Judas.)

John 13:27-28 NET

And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money.

Luke 22:4-5 NIV

Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me to betray him into your hands?" So they set out thirty silver coins for him. From that time on, Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray him.

Matthew 26:14-15 NET

Five hundred years before this time, a prophet had written that the Messiah would be sold for that exact sum:

"... thirty pieces of silver."

Zechariah 11:12 cf Matthew 27:3-10 NKJV

THE BROKEN BREAD AND THE CUP

This scenario with Judas happened in the middle of the meal. While the traitor went about his diabolical mission, Jesus continued with the supper. It has great significance.

While they were eating, [Jesus] took some bread, and after a blessing He broke it, and gave it to [his disciples], and said, "Take it; this is My body."

Mark 14:22 NASB

Obviously, they weren't eating Jesus' flesh, and yet Jesus was saying that the broken Passover loaf represented his body. The disciples must have been rather perplexed. Did this have to do with his earlier reference to himself as the Bread of Life?

And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

Mark 14:23-24 NASB

Again, the symbolism was similar—Jesus' blood would soon be poured out for many people. We will see the significance of this later on.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

Mark 14:26 ESV

| *a song
praising God

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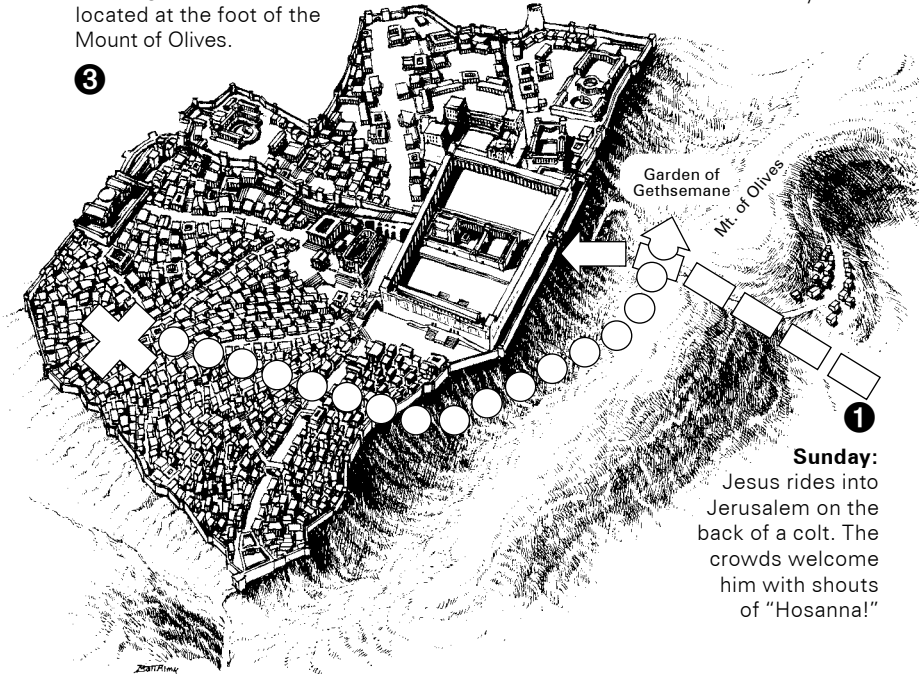
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Thursday Night:

Jesus and his disciples celebrate the Passover together. After singing a hymn they depart for the garden of Gethsemane, located at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

2 Monday to Wednesday: Jesus and his 12 disciples spend time in and around Jerusalem and Bethany.

3



Sunday:

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the back of a colt. The crowds welcome him with shouts of "Hosanna!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1 THE GARDEN

2 THE PLACE OF THE SKULL

3 THE EMPTY TOMB

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/13.html



1 THE GARDEN

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And [Jesus] said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

Mark 14:32–36 ESV

*a term of endearment similar to daddy or papa.

In the intimate language that only a son could have with his dear father, Jesus cried out, "Abba—Daddy, please find another way!" But then he submitted his will to his heavenly Father and prayed, "Your will be done."

Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard."

Mark 14:43–44 NASB

Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"

They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth."

John 18:4–5 ESV

HE SPOKE

*Jesus said to them, "I **am** [he]." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.*

John 18:5 ESV

The word [he] does not appear in the original Greek text. Jesus answered the question with an emphatic "I AM!" As we have seen, I AM is God's name, meaning "the one who exists by his own power." And it wasn't just anyone saying it; it was God himself. The effect is worth noting.

When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

John 18:6 NIV

They didn't simply drop to the ground; they drew back and fell down. Jesus "blew them off their feet" with a mini-burst of his majesty. After the stunned group had gotten up and dusted themselves off ...

... he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

John 18:7 ESV

You can almost sense the crowd's respect and fear. Jesus had unsettled the mob. This was not shaping up to be a typical arrest. Their wall of confidence cracked even more when Jesus revealed that he knew the agreed-upon sign of betrayal.

Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Luke 22:48 NASB

Judas immediately went to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

Mark 14:45 NASB

The other 11 disciples were galvanized into action. Simon Peter had a weapon.

One of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear.

Matthew 26:51 NLT

But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

Luke 22:51 ESV

What can you say? Even in the midst of all the tension, Jesus was thinking of others; he healed the high priest's servant. It was a short-sighted effort on Peter's part anyway—zeal without knowledge. On a human level, the disciples were greatly outnumbered. You can't help admiring Peter's efforts. At least he tried! But obviously Peter was better with nets than swords. When you aim at the head and get an ear, it tells you something.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

Then Jesus asked a question—an uncomfortable question.

"Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets."

Matthew 26:55-56 NASB

God's questions always expose a person's true thoughts, and if the rabble had taken a moment to think, they would have realized the inconsistency of their actions. But they were so fixated in their determination to do away with Christ, even another encounter with the miraculous power of this man didn't deter them in the least. Not even Jesus' words about them fulfilling the solemn predictions of the prophets would restrain them from carrying out their murderous intentions.

Fearing for their lives, the disciples fled into the night.

And they all left him and fled.

Mark 14:50 ESV

Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. *John 18:12 NKJV*

One can hardly read this without feeling some sense of incongruity. Jesus was only one individual. The detachment sent to arrest him would have numbered between 300 and 600 soldiers. In addition, there were Jewish officials, priests and servants. It was overkill for sure, but you can't help wondering if deep down inside they felt a poverty of power.

IN COURT

They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. *Mark 14:53 NASB*

Temple courts were not held at night. The fact that the Sanhedrin,¹ consisting of 71 men, could be assembled so quickly tells you something about the plot. Their willingness to convene in the middle of the night reveals even more. What they were doing was strictly illegal according to their own law. Even for those not familiar with the judicial system of that day, the irregularities of the trial are painfully obvious. No matter. Forget the rules. They wanted Jesus dead.

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent.

The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But He kept silent and did not answer.

Mark 14:55-56,60-61 NASB

The question was black and white: "Are you or are you not the Promised Messiah from Heaven?"

Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?"

And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

Mark 14:62-64 NKJV

The high priest, Caiaphas, knew exactly what Jesus had said. Jesus was claiming to be equal with God Almighty. For a mere man to claim to be God's eternal Son was sacrilege. But Jesus

wasn't a mere man—he was the eternal Word of God, and the Promised Deliverer about whom all the prophets had written! However, neither Caiaphas nor the other Jewish leaders believed him. So they condemned him to die. But there was a problem. The Sanhedrin did not have the authority to pass a death sentence; only the Romans could do that.

2 THE PLACE OF THE SKULL

Because night courts were illegal, the Sanhedrin met again just after sunrise to go through the legal motions of trying Jesus. He must have been exhausted. He hadn't slept all night, and they had given him a severe beating just to make sure he knew who was in control.

Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

Luke 23:1 NASB

PONTIUS PILATE

Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, had all the authority of imperial Rome behind him. Since in most cases the Jewish courts could not impose the death penalty, they needed Roman sanction. Pilate was their man. The Temple leaders knew he was weak-kneed, so a little persuading was in order.

And they began to accuse [Jesus], saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

Luke 23:2 NASB

Jesus had never prohibited his followers from paying taxes. In fact, Jesus had said quite the opposite. This was a deliberate lie. On the other hand, it was true that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah.

So Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Luke 23:3 NLT

Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

John 18:36 NLT

Jesus' reign began in the heart. He had no political ambitions.

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

“What is truth?” Pilate asked.

John 18:37-38 NIV

People still ask the same question today. But Pilate was in no mood for listening; he didn’t even wait for the answer.

With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”

John 18:38 NIV

Pilate mistrusted the priests. As Roman governor, he knew he was hated by the Jews, and he had good reason to believe that the priests did not have Caesar’s best interests in mind. The Sanhedrin must have some other motive for wanting Jesus dead.

Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge against this man.”

But they insisted, “He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.”

On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Luke 23:4–7 NIV

Pilate had the authority to hear Jesus’ case, but the situation was getting uncomfortable. Jesus was being accused of inciting the people to insurrection. How would he explain to his superiors in Rome if Jesus did provoke a riot? It would be easier to dump the whole sorry mess in Herod’s lap. Besides, Herod was no friend of his, so Pilate passed the buck.

HEROD ANTIPAS

Herod Antipas was a son of Herod the Great. As a puppet of Rome, he had been given jurisdiction over Jesus’ home province of Galilee. He had come to Jerusalem for the yearly Passover festivities.

Herod was delighted at the opportunity to see Jesus, because he had heard about him and had been hoping for a long time to see him perform a miracle. He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer.

Luke 23:8-9 NLT

SILENT

Jesus knew that Herod had no interest in determining the truth. He only wished to be entertained by a miracle. Jesus didn’t indulge Herod. Instead, he remained quiet.

The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe,

they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies. Luke 23:10–12 NIV

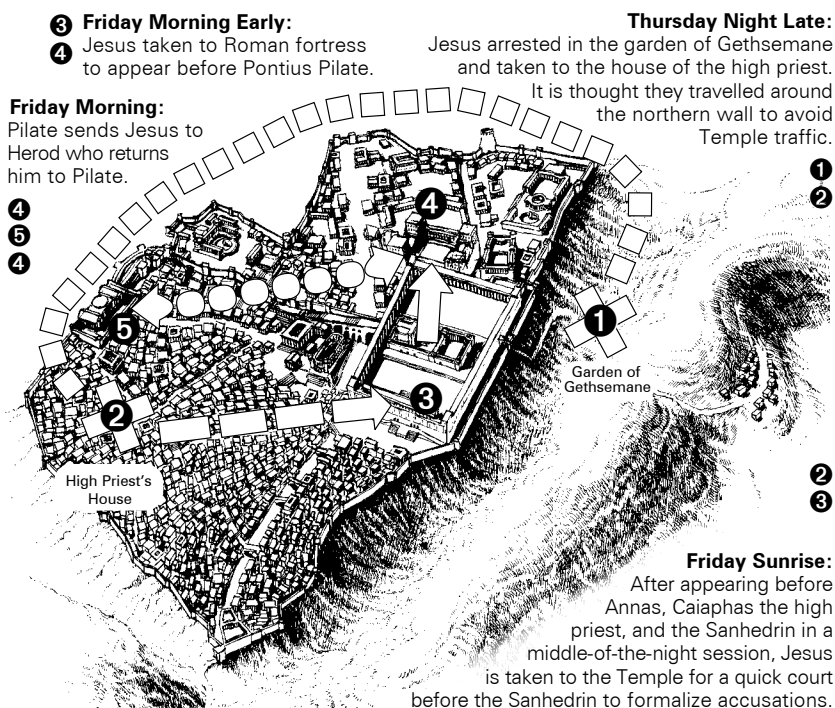
CRUCIFY HIM!

Since his arrest, Jesus had been in five court sessions: three Jewish and two Roman. This sixth trial would be his last.

By this time, word had spread throughout the city. No longer were the high priest and Sanhedrin the only ones accusing Jesus. They had been joined by a fickle multitude who only a few days before had shouted “Hosanna!” but now vehemently roared “Crucify him!” Pilate was in a dilemma. The more he dealt with Jesus, the more convinced he was that there was something uncommon about this man!

*Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore **punish** and **release** him.”*

Luke 23:13-16 ESV



Neither Herod nor Pilate could find Jesus guilty of anything deserving death. It seemed no one could accuse him of any crime. Pilate offered a weak-kneed compromise. It had two parts:

1. He would whip Jesus:

This was no ordinary beating. The whip was comprised of a stick with leather thongs affixed to one end. Each thong had butterfly-shaped slivers of bone or metal attached to it. The condemned man would have his arms bound and tied above his head to a pole which fully exposed his back to the scourge. As the whip came down, the bone and metal would sink into the flesh. Pulling the whip away virtually stripped the flesh off the back. This type of beating was so severe that often the victim died.

By law, a scourging could only be given to a convicted prisoner. Pilate himself had just said that Jesus was innocent. Because a Roman flogging was such a horrible ordeal, it can be assumed that Pilate hoped the whipping would appease Jesus' accusers so they would accept his next offer.



2. He would release Jesus:

It was the local Roman custom to release one convicted criminal at the Passover as a gesture of goodwill. Pilate suggested that Jesus be released after he had been beaten. The crowd was unanimous in their response:

But they all cried out together, "Away with this man..." Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!"

A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him."

Luke 23:18,20-22 ESV

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.

John 19:1 ESV

Seven hundred years before this time, the prophet Isaiah had written of the Messiah's willing sufferings:



I offered my back to those who beat me and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard. I did not hide my face from mockery and spitting.

Isaiah 50:6 NLT

The soldiers were not satisfied with the cruelty of a flogging. They decided to add a little jest.

And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face.

John 19:2-3 NASB

They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him.

Mark 15:19 NASB

Humiliation was not part of Pilate's sentence. A purple robe was normally worn by royalty. The thorns were a cruel parody of an imperial crown. This was mockery at its worst. Once again, seven centuries before, the prophet Isaiah had written:



He was despised and rejected by men, ... and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah 53:3 NIV

Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"

John 19:4-5 ESV

Deep in his heart, Pilate must have known that he was setting aside all justice. No doubt, he had hopes that this lacerated, thorn-crowned, bleeding man might evoke some pity.

When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

John 19:6 ESV

Pilate knew very well they could do no such thing. The Jewish courts could not impose the death sentence.

THE SON OF GOD

The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?"

John 19:7-9 NASB

Pilate had just heard that Jesus was from Galilee, thus the reason for having sent him to Herod. Now again, he was asking Jesus where he was from. No doubt, he was feeling a little nervous about someone who claimed to be the Son of God who had come down from Heaven! The Greeks believed the gods came down from Mount Olympus to fraternize with man.

Perhaps Pilate was wondering if Jesus fit that category. Certainly this was no ordinary criminal. Just the way he handled himself in court demonstrated a peace and confidence that was disconcerting. “Jesus, where are you *really* from?”

Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?”

Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above...”

From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”

So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover.

John 19:9–14 ESV

The day of Preparation was when the Passover lamb was killed.

[Pilate] said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”

They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!”

Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

John 19:14-15 ESV

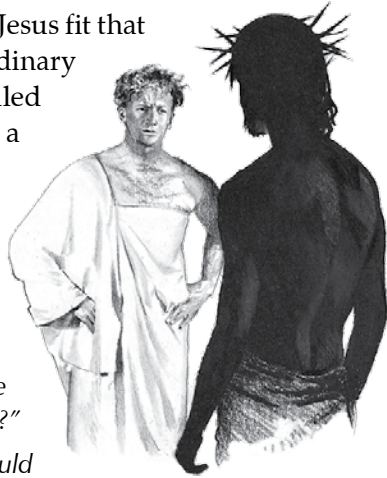
This was Israel’s final rejection of Jesus as their King. They had chosen the Roman Caesar in place of the one sent from God.

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).² Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

John 19:16-18 NIV

Crucifixion was a Roman form of capital punishment used only for slaves and criminals of the lowest order. It was a common method of execution, and secular history records hundreds being crucified at once.



Research has indicated that there were several different forms:



Standing tree: The victim was backed up to a tree and nailed to it, in whatever shape the branches flowed. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, records the Roman soldiers entertaining themselves by crucifying captives in unusual positions.³



I-shaped: a simple post in the ground. Hands were nailed over the head.



X-shaped: basically two logs planted at angles. The body was splayed out with the hands and feet fixed at four corners.



T-shaped: a pole with a crossbar on the top. This was probably the most common, next to the tree. The arms were stretched out along the bar.



†-shaped: usually reserved for criminals of some notoriety. A certificate disclosing one's crime would be tacked to the topmost part of the cross. This was probably the type on which Jesus was crucified.

The victim was usually stretched out naked. Hands and feet were held in place by nails driven through the wrist and ankle bones.

One thousand years earlier, God had instructed the prophet David to write a complete psalm about the way Jesus would die. Scripture prophesies Christ as saying:

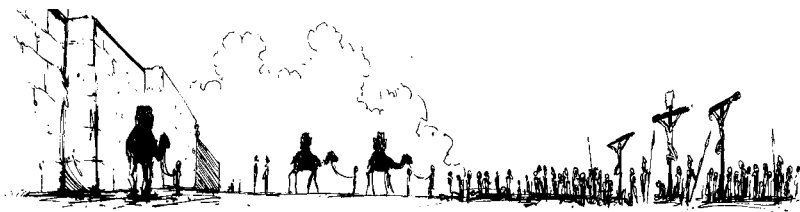


They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.

Psalm 22:16-17 NIV

This was written long before the Romans had come to power, and about 800 years before the Romans adopted crucifixion as one of their official forms of capital punishment.

To this day, crucifixion is considered to be the most brutal form of execution. Death was slow. Sometimes it took days. Ultimately, one died of asphyxiation. Hanging on outstretched arms, the pressure on the diaphragm made it impossible for one to breathe.



One could exhale only by lifting oneself up, by pulling on the arms and pushing with the feet to allow room for the diaphragm to work. Of course, this pulling and pushing was done against the excruciating restraint of the nails. Death came when exhaustion and shock left one unable to lift the body.

The nails and tormented gasping for air were not the only sources of anguish. One also suffered from thirst and exposure. People came to stare and, in Jesus' case, to mock.

Pilate also had a notice written and fastened to the cross, which read: "Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews." Thus many of the Jewish residents of Jerusalem read this notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the notice was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.

John 19:19-20 NET

Now when the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and made four shares, one for each soldier, and the tunic remained. (Now the tunic was seamless, woven from top to bottom as a single piece.) So the soldiers said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but throw dice to see who will get it."

John 19:23-24 NET

Gambling was a distraction from a gory task. As the soldiers sat beneath Jesus' cross, perhaps rolling dice in a helmet, they had no way of knowing they were fulfilling an ancient prophecy.



This took place to fulfill the scripture that says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they threw dice." So the soldiers did these things.

John 19:24 NET compare Psalm 22:18

And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"

Luke 23:35 ESV

Ten centuries earlier, God had said through King David that the Promised Deliverer would be mocked.



But I am a worm, not a man; people insult me and despise me. All who see me taunt me; they mock me and shake their heads.

Psalm 22:6-7 NET

The mockers' exact words were foretold by the prophet David:



"He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"

Psalm 22:8 NKJV

The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"

One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"

But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"

And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Luke 23:36-37,39-43 NASB

Jesus assured the thief that as soon as they both died, their spirits would meet each other in Paradise. Jesus could say this because he knew that this man was trusting in him to deliver him from the consequences of sin—from eternal punishment.

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour ...

Luke 23:44 NASB

At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Mark 15:34 NASB

Once again, 1000 years before, God had prophesied through King David that the Messiah would say just those words:



"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" *Psalms 22:1 NASB*

It wasn't without reason that Jesus cried this out loud. We will look at its meaning in a following chapter.

The significance of Jesus' final moments on the cross cannot be emphasized enough. Scripture says:

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said,; "It is finished!"... "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last ... And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Luke 23:46 and John 19:30 NASB

And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Mark 15:38 NASB

Jesus was dead. But had Satan and his demons triumphed over God? There were some questions that needed to be answered. Why had the Temple curtain torn—from top to bottom? And why had Jesus shouted "It is finished!" with such intensity?

THE TORN CURTAIN

Remember, the Temple was a permanent replica of the original Tabernacle. The curtain in question separated the Holy Place from the sacred Holy of Holies. It was no small matter for this veil to be torn.

First of all, Scripture says that the curtain shielded the Most Holy Place from man's view. To look behind the curtain was to die. God had told Moses centuries before:

The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover."

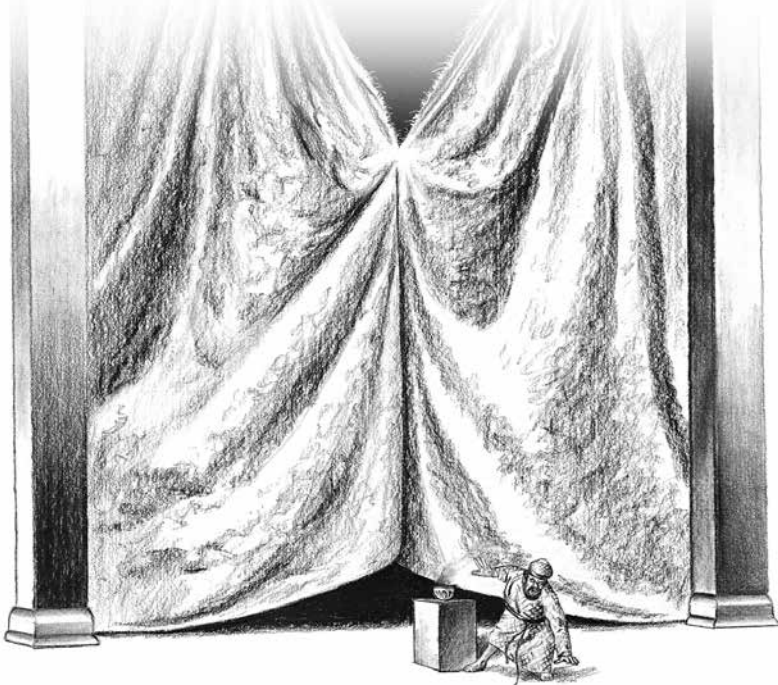
Leviticus 16:2 NIV

Second, to tear the curtain in any way would have been a monumental task. It is said that the curtain was 18 metres (60 ft) in height, 9 metres (30 ft) in width, being the thickness of a man's hand—about 10 centimetres (4 in).⁴

Third, to be torn from the top to the bottom could only mean one thing: God had rent the curtain, not man.

By Jewish reckoning, Jesus died at the ninth hour which would have been 3:00 p.m. The Temple would have been full of priests performing their sacred duties. This was the time of the evening sacrifice, when a lamb was killed. It was also the Passover. News of the torn curtain could not have been concealed. Too many people were present and the event was too staggering to be forgotten.

The significance of this whole incident will be explained shortly.



THE SHOUT OF VICTORY!

The phrase “It is finished” is translated from a single Greek word *tetelestai*. *Tetelestai* had many different usages, but the following three have significance to the story:⁵

1. *Tetelestai* was used by a servant reporting to his or her master upon completing a task: “The job you gave me is finished.”
2. *Tetelestai* was also a term in Greek commercial life. It signified the completion of a transaction when a debt was paid in full. When the final payment was made, one could say “*Tetelestai*,” that is, “The debt is finished.” Ancient receipts for taxes have been found with “*tetelestai*—paid in full”—written across them.
3. The selection of a lamb for sacrifice in the Temple was always an important time. The flock would be searched and upon finding an unblemished lamb, one would say “*Tetelestai*—the job is finished.”

Quite literally Jesus shouted: “The work you gave me to do is completed, the debt is paid, the sacrificial lamb is found!” The Word of God says that Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*It is finished!*”

When the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!” Luke 23:47 NKJV

It is noteworthy that it was the centurion, an officer in charge of 100 soldiers, who immediately commented on Jesus’ cry. Surely he, a military man, knew the difference between a gasp of defeat and a shout of victory.

Then, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not stay on the crosses on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was an especially important one), the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to have the victims’ legs broken and the bodies taken down.

John 19:31 NET

BREAK THE LEGS

It was Passover week and this day was the climax, when the lamb was to be killed. The chief priests wanted this crucifixion business over and done with, so as not to contaminate the feast. They asked that Jesus’ legs be broken. This would mean that the one being crucified could no longer lift himself up to breathe, resulting in quick asphyxiation, unless the shock of his bones being broken killed him first.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who had been crucified with Jesus, first the one and then the other.

*But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, **they did not break his legs**. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out immediately.*

John 19:32-34 NET

A soldier trained in the art of killing thrust a spear into Jesus' heart. To bungle a public execution was unthinkable. The soldier knew exactly *where* to thrust that instrument of death to make sure not a wisp of life could linger. Scripture says water and blood flowed out. Medical experts tell us that such an event was a sure sign that death had already occurred. Jesus was definitely dead.



*And the person who saw it has testified (and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth), so that you also may believe. For **these things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled**, “Not a bone of his will be broken.” And again another scripture says, “They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”*

John 19:35-37 NET

3 THE EMPTY TOMB

FRIDAY: LATE AFTERNOON

13-C
1:37

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

John 19:38-42 ESV

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Luke 23:55-56 NIV

Though Joseph and Nicodemus were part of the Sanhedrin, they were secret followers of Jesus. According to their traditional custom, they wrapped Jesus in long burial cloths, intermingled with 34 kilograms (75 lbs) of aromatic spices and laid him in a tomb. A large wheel-like stone, possibly weighing as much as 1.8 tonnes (two tons), was rolled across the front of the sepulcher.

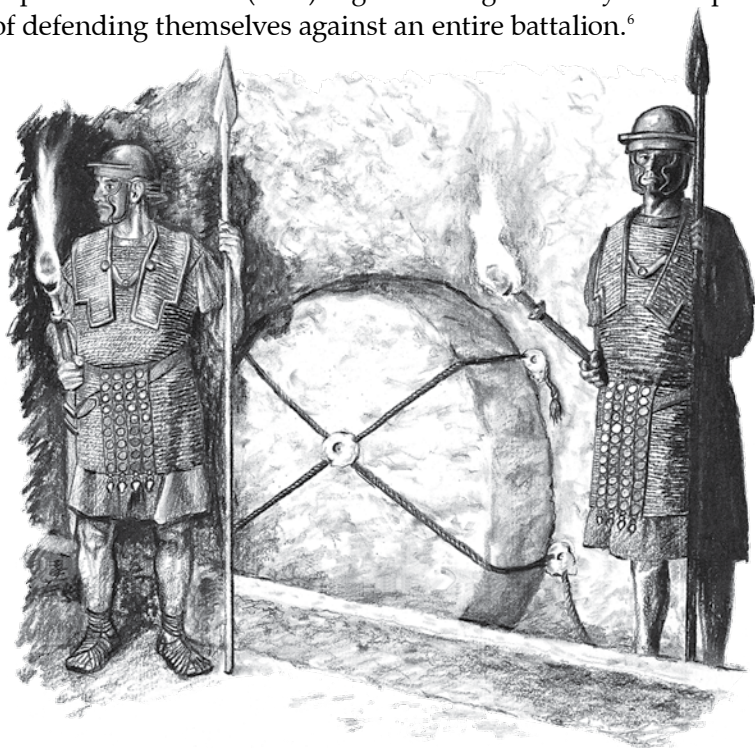
The women watched and then went home to prepare additional spices for the final burial. It was Friday night.

SATURDAY

Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how." And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone. *Matthew 27:62–66 NASB*

This was no ragtag band of soldiery sent to guard the tomb. A Roman guard consisted of four to sixteen men, each man trained to protect two metres (six ft) of ground. Together they were capable of defending themselves against an entire battalion.⁶



Pilate instructed the chief priests and Pharisees to seal the tomb. Ropes would have been stretched across the large stone door and fixed in place with moist clay. The clay would then

be imprinted with a signet ring. Any tampering with the rock would be immediately apparent.

SUNDAY

The guard was set in place on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. On Sunday while it was still dark...

...there was a great earthquake, because an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled aside the stone and sat on it.

His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.

Matthew 28:2–4 NLT

It took only a glance for these rough and rugged soldiers to know they were no match for this one angel. The last phrase in the above passage is a first-century way of saying “they passed out from fear!” Who would have dreamed that the tomb could be empty. All the evidence pointed to one fact: Jesus had obviously come back to life!

In the meantime:

Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.

Mark 16:1–4 NASB

Mary Magdalene apparently turned away in shock and dismay at the initial sight of the open tomb. She probably assumed the obvious—Jesus’ body had been vandalized. Sobbing, she turned and ran to tell the disciples. But Mary and Salome pushed forward.

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”

Mark 16:5–7 NKJV

So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." Matthew 28:8–10 ESV

Reading the record,⁷ you can sense the confusion and excitement of the early morning news. For those who had seen Jesus die, the report from the elated women was met with a great deal of skepticism. Initially ...

... these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. Luke 24:11 NASB

Peter ran to check out the tomb. John ran too, passing Peter on the way, but then waited outside the entrance.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. John 20:6–7 ESV

This was not the scene of a plundered grave. The long strips of cloth used to shroud the body were still wrapped as though around a corpse, but they were collapsed—empty! The body had passed right through them. The head napkin was folded too, as if someone had tidied up before leaving. Scripture says Peter saw, but John saw and believed. For John there was no doubt that Jesus was alive! But Peter's head was spinning. He needed time to think.

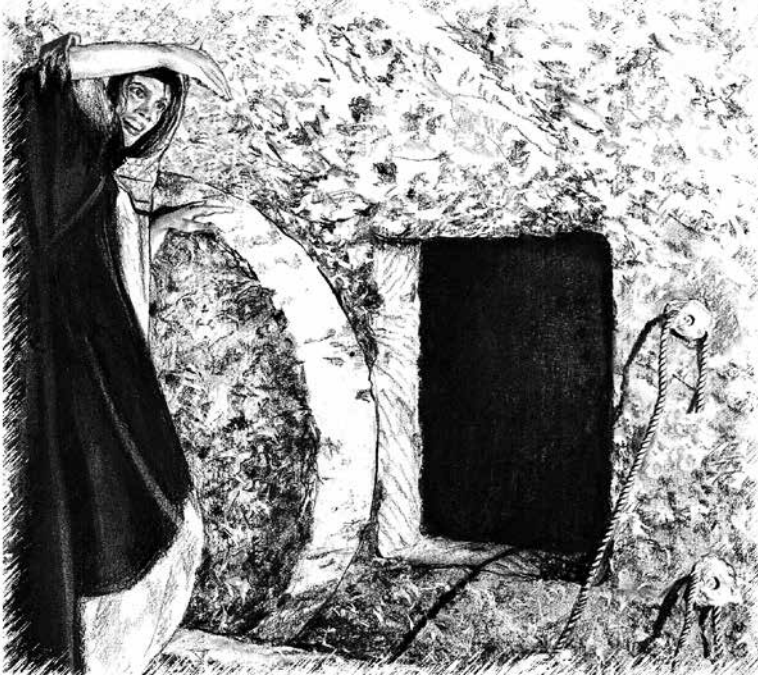
It still must have been early morning when Mary Magdalene returned and ...

... stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." John 20:11–13 NKJV

The tomb was located in a garden, so perhaps she supposed these angels were gardeners. Mary was so distressed that she did not think to identify the men. We must remember that Mary was grieving intensely and that the entire conversation was carried on through her sobbing.



When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"

Because she thought he was the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

John 20:14–16 NET

If one can say a name in such a way that it brings back all the memories of every previous encounter with a loved one, then Jesus did just that. Mary recognized the voice immediately.

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

John 20:16 ESV

Now she had a different reason to weep. She must have flung her arms around him, perhaps embracing his feet in keeping with the custom of that day. Jesus told Mary to go and tell the disciples that he was alive.

Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!"

John 20:18 NLT

THE GUARDS

While all this was happening, the guards were hunting down the chief priests. There was no way they were going back to face Pilate.

Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.

Matthew 28:11 NASB

The tomb was empty—Jesus’ enemies agreed with that fact.

And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ And if this should come to the governor’s ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.” And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.

Matthew 28:12–15 NASB

It took an immense sum of money to persuade these proud soldiers to say that they had been sleeping. (To sleep on duty was punishable by death.) Of course it wasn’t true. Once again you can see the hand of Satan behind it all, rushing around doing damage control. After all, he is the father of lies. It was a feeble effort to save face. No doubt, Satan realized he was defeated. Jesus, the Promised Deliverer, had crushed Satan’s head, just as God had promised way back in the garden of Eden.

ALIVE

Jesus had come back to life. He was truly alive—physically! For three days his body had lain lifeless in the tomb, separated from his spirit. But then in a dramatic demonstration of supernatural power, Jesus had been resurrected with a new body.

Jesus had foretold his own death during his ministry.

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.”

John 10:17-18 NIV

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

Jesus’ death had not been an ordinary one. For mankind, death is a consequence of sin—of breaking God’s Law. But Jesus had kept the Ten Commands perfectly. He was sinless, so he did not need to die. According to the law of sin and death, Jesus could have lived forever. So why did he die? Satan hadn’t killed Jesus against

his will, nor had the Jews or the Romans. Jesus had chosen to die, willingly. But why? The next chapter will answer that question. The events of that early morn were just a beginning. Over the next 40 days, Jesus appeared to many of those who knew him best. But before we leave the resurrection day, there is one more account that must be shared.

72 HOURS THAT CHANGED HISTORY

* Jewish Friday	THU	Disciples prepare Passover Passover Supper Walk to Garden of Gethsemane Jesus arrested in Garden; disciples flee
	FRI	1 st Trial — before Chief Priest's father-in-law, Annas 2 nd Trial — before Chief Priest and Sanhedrin 3 rd Trial — before Sanhedrin (to make it legal) 6:30 am 4 th Trial — before Pilate 5 th Trial — before Herod (Jesus mocked) 6 th Trial — before Pilate (Jesus scourged) 9:00 am Crucifixion NOON 3:00 pm Jesus cries, "It is finished"; Temple curtain torn Legs of two thieves broken; Jesus' side pierced Joseph of Arimathea requests Jesus' body for burial Jesus buried in tomb
	SAT	Roman guard requested and placed at tomb Tomb sealed
	SUN	Earthquake - stone rolled away by angels; guards flee Women go to tomb Jesus appears to Mary and Salome Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene Jesus appears to Peter

*Jewish days begin at sundown, continue through the night into the next day until the following sundown.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

- 1** THE STRANGER
- 2** THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS
— ADAM TO NOAH —
- 3** THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS
— ABRAHAM TO THE LAW —
- 4** THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS
— THE TENT TO THE BRONZE SERPENT —
- 5** THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS
— JOHN TO THE RESURRECTION —

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/14.html



1 THE STRANGER

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?"

And they stood still, looking sad.

Luke 24:13–17 ESV

These men were not part of the inner circle of disciples, but they too were followers of Jesus.

Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

Luke 24:18–24 ESV

The two disciples gave a brief synopsis of the day. Of course, all of this was not news to Jesus, but he quietly waited for them to finish. He had news for them too.

*And he said to them, "**O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Luke 24:25–27 ESV

Jesus told them that the Messiah *had to* suffer, die and then come back to life. But Jesus didn't stop there. He went back into the Scriptures and taught them about himself, starting at the very

beginning. He then progressed step by step, story by story through the entire Old Testament. It must have been quite a lesson.

And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

Luke 24:28-32 NASB

God himself had lit a fire of understanding in their minds. They were excited!

And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem . . .

Luke 24:33 NASB

You can imagine the trip back to the city as these elated men discussed what they would say to the 11* disciples. The journey was all uphill, but they must have pushed themselves onward for they had good news!

*Judas Iscariot had committed suicide.

There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

*He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**"*

Luke 24:33-44 NIV

Just as he had done earlier with the two men on the road to Emmaus, Jesus used the writings of the prophets to explain all the events

surrounding his death, burial and resurrection. Jesus took each section of the Old Testament Scriptures—the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms—and showed the disciples how it all applied to him.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” *Luke 24:45-48 NIV*

Jesus said his death, burial and resurrection *must* happen to fulfill Scripture. He went on to say that this was such good news, it would be told everywhere, beginning at Jerusalem.

Before we go on with the story, we want to stop and go back to the beginning, just as Jesus did with his disciples. We want to consider what Jesus said about himself in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.

Exactly why did Jesus come to the earth, and why did he *have* to suffer and die when all along he planned to come back to life?

Why didn't he simply tell people to believe in him and skip the entire crucifixion?

What were these events all about—this death, burial and resurrection? What did the Law and the Prophets have to say?

The last piece of the puzzle is about to be put in place. When you understand this part, you will have the whole picture.



2 THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

— ADAM TO NOAH —

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Why did Jesus have to die? To answer this question, we will go back in time and start at the very beginning.

ADAM AND EVE

Remember the unique friendship that existed between God and man at the onset of creation? The LORD made man, not as a robot, but with a will so that by the obedient choices he made he would honour God, just as an obedient son honours his father.

You will recall that through obedience, man enjoyed tremendous benefits from this relationship, for the LORD was committed to Adam and Eve's well-being. God and man were friends.

But then Adam and Eve deliberately ignored God's instructions and experimented with forbidden knowledge. Since the events surrounding this incident contain critical elements of the puzzle, Scripture uses some powerful word pictures to help us understand what happened.

God's Word says that man felt he knew "better than" the LORD what was good for him. He chose his own path, doing his own thing, but that path led into a spiritual wilderness. Man was LOST. Instead of listening to God, man believed Satan. Man joined Satan's rebellious ranks, thus becoming an ENEMY of God.

But such a choice had ramifications. Scripture teaches us that sin's effects are very costly.

Because there was no trust, there was no relationship. Immediately the unique friendship between God and man ended. Separated by sin, man was ESTRANGED from his perfect, holy Creator-Owner. God was no longer close. He seemed remote and distant.

Satan was not the benevolent friend God had been. Rather, the Devil manipulated man with lies to do his satanic will. Man became a SLAVE to Satan and a slave to sin.

In choosing his own way, man disobeyed the one command that God had given him. This wasn't without hurt or harm, for whenever you break a law, you also face a consequence.

God took off his mantle of friendship and donned a magistrate's cloak. As man's judge, God found man GUILTY of a crime—of breaking his Law, of sinning against a holy God.

In essence, God wrote out a verdict, a Certificate of Debt. Man was now a DEBTOR with a price to pay. The penalty for sin was death.

Every human being now faced a physical DEATH. The spirit would be *separated* from the body; the life *separated* from family and friends.

Because the stench of sin corrupted man's total being, God SEPARATED himself from mankind. Man's relationship with God was over—it was *dead*.

After physical death, there would be a SECOND DEATH. Man would be *separated* forever from God and his expressions of love. He would be confined in the Lake of Fire, the place that had been prepared for Satan and his demons.

Death in its three aspects ruled man's life, and he could do nothing about it. Man had no choice as to whether he wanted to die or not. It was a bitter, potent reality that all faced, that all shared, that all who thought soberly, feared. With absolute, utter finality, Scripture clearly states:

A person shall die for his own sin.

2 Chronicles 25:4 NKJV

These word pictures help us understand just how far removed from God mankind had become as a result of sin. Man was faced with that age-old question: How can we get rid of our sin with all its consequences and gain *a righteousness equal to God's righteousness* so we can be accepted back into his presence?

A DESPERATE ATTEMPT

Remember how Adam and Eve tried to cover up their sin by clothing themselves in fig leaves? We saw that although the LORD rejected their efforts, he did not abandon them in their sin. Rather, he ...

...devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.

2 Samuel 14:14 NIV

The LORD used these events to teach Adam and Eve, as well as us, universal principles that apply to all mankind.

ACCEPTANCE

Just as Adam and Eve could not make themselves acceptable to God by fixing up their outward appearance, neither can we be accepted based on our externals. We may impress others with what we are on the outside, but God knows what we are really like.

We saw that God provided Adam and Eve with a way of acceptance, but on different terms. Scripture says:

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Genesis 3:21 NASB

The significance of this little verse would be overlooked if it weren't for other parts of Scripture explaining it. So what does it mean? What would Jesus have told the disciples? Simply this: Just as an animal had to die to clothe Adam and Eve in acceptable clothing, so Jesus *had to* die to make us acceptable in the presence of God. This was and is God's idea. It's God's way to acceptability.

As the disciples struggled to comprehend what Jesus was saying, there must have been a torrent of questions.

Why didn't God simply clothe Adam and Eve with his choice of leaves? And why would Jesus have to die for us? Was there not another way? We can suppose that Jesus continued with the story of Cain and Abel.

CAIN AND ABEL

Remember how the children of Adam and Eve brought sacrifices to God? Why did they do that? We saw that the escape route God devised for sinners had two dimensions:

There was an *inward* aspect—Cain and Abel had to make a personal choice in their hearts; they had to decide whether or not they would believe God.

There was also an *outward* aspect—a visual aid to help them understand what it would take to remove sin.

Remember when Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices to God? Cain brought vegetables from his garden but Abel brought the firstborn of his flock. God rejected Cain's sacrifice, but he accepted Abel's. Why?

CAIN

Inward: Cain did not believe God. Cain believed in God, but he did not believe *what* God had said. He had his own ideas about how to get rid of sin and be made right with the LORD.

In the same way, our world is full of people who have their own notions about God and how to please him. It's become fashionable to ignore God's Word and believe a personally-tailored theory. A custom-designed god is in vogue. Cain would have felt right at home in today's society.

Outward: Based on his thinking, Cain did his own thing. He brought a sacrifice that did not illustrate God's way of dealing with the sin problem. Vegetables do not shed blood. Cain ignored the fact that ...

... without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22 NASB

His sacrifice did not provide an atonement-covering for sin. Scripture tells us:

Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one...his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. 1 John 3:12 NIV



ABEL

On the other hand, God accepted Abel's sacrifice.

Inward: Abel was trusting the LORD to be his Saviour. This is what God wanted. God still wants people to trust him. We are told repeatedly throughout the pages of Scripture that we are to trust the LORD Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Outward: God accepted Abel's sacrifice because it illustrated what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

- ❖ It pictured **substitution**: Just as an innocent animal died in Abel's place, so an innocent Jesus died in our place paying the death penalty for us.

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

1 Peter 3:18 NIV

- ❖ It pictured **atonement**: From the beginning of time, the need for a blood sacrifice has been recognized in many cultures. Now we find out why: Just as an animal shed its blood so Abel might have a covering for sin, in the same way, Jesus offered himself as the ultimate blood sacrifice so we might have forgiveness of sin. Scripture says the relationship that was broken by disobedience is now restored through Jesus' death on the cross.

This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies ...

Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body.

Colossians 1:21-22 NLT

As children of Adam and Eve, we were born into this world as ENEMIES of God ... but now, because of Jesus' physical death on the cross, we are RECONCILED. We can be friends again. The broken relationship has been restored.

Some may say, "Okay, I can see how Jesus' death took care of our sin problem, but how do we gain a righteousness *equal* to God's righteousness so we can be accepted back into his presence?"

As we said many chapters ago, this question has two facets, like opposite sides of the same coin. You can't divide them. When God took care of our sin problem, he also addressed our lack of righteousness. We will understand this better in just a few pages.

NOAH

In the days of Noah, the people ignored God's Word. Perhaps they thought the old man was crazy. Whatever the case, they persuaded themselves that life existed only for the here and now. God did not

withhold his judgment just because they had the wrong philosophy of life. They perished in their foolishness.

God was saying this: Just as the people of Noah's day were judged for their sin, so God will judge all men, regardless of how they think.

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." Psalm 14:1; 53:1 ESV

He who trusts in his own heart is a fool. Proverbs 28:26 NKJV

God will let us ignore him and even reject his way of escape for a time, but eventually we must face the inescapable conclusion: we must personally pay our sin-debt with our own eternal death.

14-D
0:33

Remember how Noah and his sons were kept safe in the ark? There was only one boat and only one door to enter and gain refuge from the flood. There was no other option.

In the same way, Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life.

Jesus replied, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 NET

And just as safety could only be found inside the ark, so only by trusting in Jesus can we find safety from everlasting punishment.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1 NASB

Scripture is very clear that there is only one way to God. Those who ignore or reject "the way" face the same fate as those who didn't heed Noah's warnings of the coming flood: spiritual, physical and eternal death with all its implications. The Scriptures are very explicit: Jesus is the only way to God.

14-E
2:43

BABEL

Remember how we saw that Babel was the first example of organized religion in Scripture? The people tried to build a tower to reach the heavens. We said that a definition for the word *religion* is "man's efforts to reach God." At Babel, man slaved away with brick and tar. In the same way, religion is a taskmaster that requires constant struggle. It demands ever-increasing efforts to please God, gods, spirits or idols.

In contrast to religion, Scripture says that the only true way to God was provided by the LORD himself when in his mercy, God reached down to man in the person of Jesus Christ. All the work needed to restore the broken relationship was done by Jesus on the cross.

You can almost see the glimmer of excitement in the disciples' eyes as they listened to God's plan through thousands of years of history

being fulfilled in Jesus. For centuries, man had looked forward to the day when he would be completely delivered from judgment of sin. Now that time had come. But Jesus wasn't finished with his explanation. He continued, no doubt, with the story of Abraham.

3 THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

— ABRAHAM TO THE LAW —

The disciples must have leaned forward with anticipation as Jesus launched into his explanation of the story of Abraham.

Remember when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son on the mountains of Moriah? Abraham's son was under God's order to die and since he was a sinner, he deserved to die. Abraham bound his son and placed him on the altar—helpless.

A HELPLESS SINNER

What God was saying is this: Just as Abraham's son was helpless and could not save himself, so all of us are bound by sin and cannot save ourselves from its consequences.

Remember how Abraham took the knife and prepared to slay his son? Abraham was trusting in God's goodness to provide a solution to death. At the last moment, God called from Heaven and stopped him. Because of Abraham's trust, the LORD provided a *substitute* sacrifice for his son.

14-F
2:52

A SUFFICIENT SUBSTITUTE

Scripture says that Abraham named the mountain "The LORD Will Provide." One would have thought he would have named it "The LORD *Has* Provided," but no, he named it "The LORD Will Provide." It was as if Abraham was looking forward to a time when another sacrifice would be made, one which would provide salvation for the whole world. Two thousand years later, in the same location, Jesus the Messiah fulfilled Abraham's prophecy and laid down his life as the perfect sacrifice.

Just as the ram died in the place of Abraham's son, so *Jesus died in our place*. We should have died and been punished for our sin, but Jesus died and took our punishment on the cross. He is *our* substitute.

If the ram had not died, then Abraham's son would have had to die. If Jesus had not died, then we would have had to pay our *own* sin-debt.

Down through history, every person had carried a Certificate of Debt—an enormous debt of sin that must be paid. The only way that debt could be paid was with one's own eternal death.

But then Jesus came. His death completely paid man's sin-debt—past, present and future. That is why Jesus cried from the cross, "It is finished!" The debt is paid!

But the payment made by Jesus is only effective if one believes—like Abraham believed.

A PERSONAL FAITH

Scripture says that God honoured Abraham's faith.

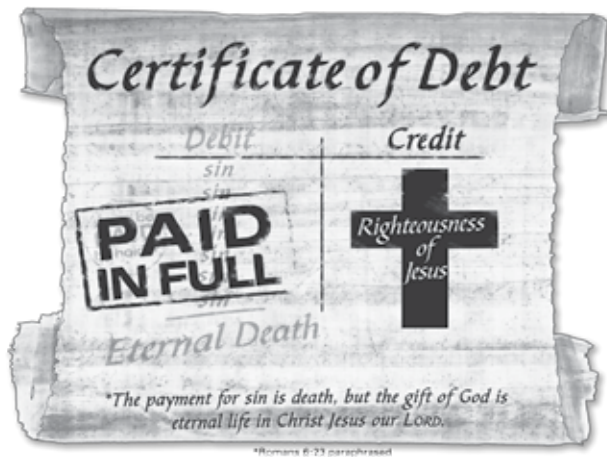
"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:3 NET

God did that for Abraham because the LORD was looking ahead to what Jesus would do on the cross. The Bible says:

The words "it was credited to him" were written **not for him [Abraham] alone, but also for us**, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Romans 4:23-24 NIV



Remember that the word *believe*, as used in Scripture, has a fuller meaning than we sometimes give it.

- ❖ The terms *faith*, *belief*, *trust* and *confidence* have the same meaning.
- ❖ Genuine faith is built on *fact* (i.e. "Jesus died in our place for our sin"). Faith is not built on *feeling* forgiven.
- ❖ True biblical belief does not stop with mental assent to the truth. It includes a *heart trust*, a confidence in the facts

expressed by a voluntary act of the will. We *choose* to believe (e.g. “I believe that Jesus has paid *my* sin-debt”).

All of this would have been good news to the disciples. It should be good news to us as well. The Word of God says:

Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4 NIV

The accounts of Abraham’s faith and sacrifice were stories the disciples knew well. Although they had heard them since childhood, now they were seeing the whole picture for the first time. As Jesus spoke, every eye was glued on him, the Promised Saviour, now in their midst. Jesus continued.



THE PASSOVER

Remember when the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt and God delivered them from Pharaoh with great plagues? The last plague was the death of the firstborn child. God had said that if the Israelites followed his Word, they would be safe from this tragedy.

Do you recall how God told the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb? Well, according to the Scriptures, Jesus Christ is our Lamb.

It hardly seems a coincidence that from the time of Jesus’ birth, he was identified with these harmless creatures. He was born in a stable, a place where little lambs could be sheltered. His first visitors were shepherds, men who cared for lambs and made sure they came to no harm. We are told that Bethlehem, his birth city, was commissioned by the high priests as a place to raise lambs for use in the Temple sacrifices. John the Baptist said of Jesus:

“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

John 1:29 NET

So when we find Jesus identified as the Passover lamb, we shouldn’t be surprised. Consider a few of the parallels:

Remember how the Passover lamb could have no defect? *Jesus was sinless.*

The lamb had to be a male. *Jesus was a man.*

The Passover lamb was put to death in the place of the firstborn. *Jesus died in our place.*

The blood was applied to the doorposts and lintel of the house. *Jesus shed his blood on a wooden cross.*

▶ 14-G
0:51

▶ 14-H
1:28

Just as safety was only found by remaining inside, so only by trusting in what Jesus did on the cross do we find safety from eternal death.

When the death angel came, wherever he saw the blood applied, he would “pass over” that house. He passed over because the lamb had already taken the judgment of the firstborn.

Similarly, God has provided a way for his judgment to pass over us, because all the judgment we deserved rested upon Jesus.



God had specifically told the Israelites that they must not break any bones when they ate the Passover lamb. This was because the lamb was a *picture*, a foreshadow of Jesus. Jesus’ bones were not broken either. When the Roman soldiers...

...came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

John 19:33 ESV

As the disciples sat there, hanging on to every word, listening to Jesus explain the real significance of the Passover, they couldn’t help but think of what time of year it was. Jesus had been crucified on the very day the Passover lamb died! They had no way of knowing that the priests had hoped to kill him after the feast was over, but they did know God’s plan had triumphed. Jesus not only died on the right day, but he died at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.), the very hour the Temple lamb was offered—the hour of the evening sacrifice.

He died right on schedule, *just as the prophets had said he would.*¹
Scripture says:

Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 1 Corinthians 5:7 ESV

THE LAW

Remember the Ten Commandments? The Israelites thought it would be easy to obey them. Today, many people believe they can please God by keeping the ten rules or some modified version of them. But we saw from our study that God expects nothing less than perfect obedience.

[He] who obeys the whole law and but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. James 2:10 NET

For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20 NASB

Trying to keep the Ten Commandments does not restore the broken relationship with God.

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. Romans 3:20 NIV

The Law reminds us of our age-old, two-sides-of-the-coin dilemma. We have something we don't want—sin; and we need something we don't have—righteousness. The Ten Commandments cannot give us a righteousness *equal* to God's righteousness. But Jesus did not ignore the Law. He said:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Matthew 5:17 ESV

Jesus did something we could not do. He kept the Law perfectly. He then went on to reveal to mankind that there is a type of righteousness totally unrelated to the Law, a level of goodness that comes directly from God himself.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Romans 3:21-22 ESV

Scripture says that to obtain this type of righteousness, all we have to do is *believe*. It's just that simple. Simple for us, that is, but for God it involved a lot more.

God's just character could not overlook sin and pretend it had not happened. Sin must be punished—there had to be death. Up to this time, man had been offering animal sacrifices as a death payment for sin, but as we saw, they were only temporary coverings, because ...

... it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 10:4 NASB

Was there a solution? Yes, there was. In one remarkable act of selfless love, God came to our rescue in the person of Jesus.

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

Romans 3:25 NIV

14-J
4:23

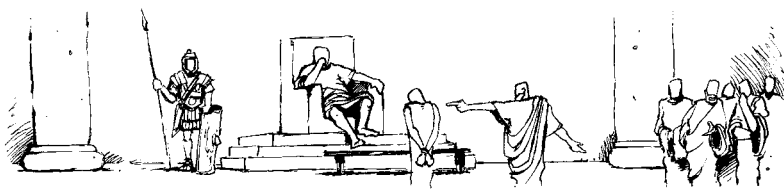
▶ God's just nature was satisfied by the death of Jesus, a death-payment for sin. God had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished because he knew that someday Jesus would die for all sin, paying the death penalty in full. Jesus died so God could ...

... demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:26 NIV

JUSTIFIED

The word *justified* was a judicial term used in the courtrooms of Jesus' day. Remember the events when man sinned in the garden? At that time God took off the mantle of friendship and donned a magistrate's cloak. As a fair and just judge, God found man GUILTY of a crime, breaking God's perfect Law, sinning against a holy God. Man stood before a frowning God, accused and convicted as a perpetual, incurable lawbreaker. The sentence was death—eternal death.



But then God rose from his judgment bench, and taking off the judicial cloak, he put back on the mantle of a friend. God the Son, the eternal Word, left the lofty heights of Heaven and descended as the God-man, Jesus, to stand with us in front of

the bench. He had only one purpose: to take our sentence of death upon himself and pay it for us. Since he had no sin of his own to die for, he was able to die for the sin of others.² He died in our place. He was able to pay sin's death penalty for all time, for all mankind.

Sin was gone, but righteousness was still needed. Ah yes, we saw earlier that just like Abraham, righteousness comes to us by faith. However, to provide that purity, something had to happen in God's courtroom. Jesus not only took our putrid rags of sin upon himself, but then—wonder of wonders—he thoroughly wrapped us in the pure, clean robe of his righteousness, a level of righteousness that is completely *equal* to *his* holy perfection.

Now, as God sits as a judge and looks across the faces of humanity, wherever he sees one clothed in Christ's righteousness, he can honestly and justly say, "In my heavenly courtroom, that man, that woman stands before me perfect." The almighty Judge of Heaven raises his gavel and with a crash, declares us "Righteous!"

DECLARED RIGHTEOUS

That is the meaning of the word *justified*—to be "declared righteous" in God's sight. But remember: this is only true for those who believe that Jesus died in their place. Scripture says ...

... that a man is justified by faith.

Romans 3:28 NKJV

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 KJV

No, the Ten Commandments cannot make one righteous.

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law.

Galatians 3:11 ESV

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23 NASB

But the Law had a purpose. Scripture says the Ten Commands are like a teacher who takes us by the hand, leads us to the cross, and points out to us our need for a Saviour.

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:24 KJV

Everyone needs a Saviour. Only when clothed in the righteousness of Christ, can we experience God's welcoming smile.

14-K
1:53**LOVE AND JUSTICE**

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus told the disciples he *had* to die. The idea of Jesus “having to die” makes us uncomfortable—we know we don’t deserve such love. Why did he say that? His death was necessary in this sense:

If God had exclusively allowed the *just* side of his nature to rule, then we would have had to die for our own sin. Such a ruling would have been fair, but his *love* would not allow that.

On the other hand, if *love* had only ruled his character, he would have ignored sin for eternity. But that was not an option because of his *just* nature. Sin must be dealt with.

It was in his death that we find the complete and perfectly balanced expression of both attributes: boundless *love* shown and infinite *justice* satisfied. From God’s point of view, *love* and *justice* made the cross necessary.

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13 NASB

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 NKJV

In doing what he did, God acted in a manner completely outside our realm of understanding. For the Creator to remain God and yet show such compassion for his creatures that he became a human and died, is beyond our ability to comprehend. Incredible! God’s ways are beyond our ways. All we can do is believe what God says in his Word and say with Mary, “How can this be? With God nothing is impossible.” We submit to God’s Word and will.

4 THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

— THE TENT TO THE BRONZE SERPENT —

14-L
6:11

You will recall how God instructed Moses to build a very special tent—the Tabernacle. It was an elaborate visual aid to help us understand what God was doing to mend our broken relationship with him. Remember how God showed his presence among the Israelites with a pillar of cloud by day and a column of fire by night? That pillar hovered over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies and the glory of God filled the entire room.

Scripture teaches that Jesus fulfilled the hidden symbolism of the Tabernacle and God's cloud of glory. As we have seen, one of Jesus' titles is:

"Immanuel" (which means, God with us.) Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23 ESV

Just as God's glory filled the Holy of Holies, so his glory resided in Jesus, the Holy One. Do you remember how Jesus took three of his disciples up on a mountain and showed them his glory? One of the disciples who witnessed it wrote:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (literally: "set up his Tabernacle") among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 NIV

ONE ENTRANCE

When man approached God in the Tabernacle, the first thing he saw was the wall around the courtyard which had only one entrance, a reminder that there is only one way to God. Jesus said:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

John 14:6 NLT

THE BRONZE ALTAR

As a person entered the Tabernacle, the first piece of furniture he saw was the bronze altar, a reminder that the first step to a right relationship with God was through the blood sacrifice. It's the same with us. The first and only step to a right relationship with God is through Jesus, who sacrificed his life in our place.

Even a very brief comparison of these two places of death—the bronze altar and the cross—show how Jesus completely fulfilled the graphic picture illustrated in the Tabernacle offerings.

The Bronze Altar	The Cross
The sacrifice wasfrom either the herd or the flock. ...a male ...without defect ...[to] be accepted on his behalf ...to make atonement [or covering for sin] for him ...[a] blood [sacrifice]. <i>Leviticus 1:2–5</i>	Jesus was... ...the Lamb of God ...a male ...sinless ...the one who died in our place ...the one who provided forgiveness of sin ...the blood sacrifice made for us.

THE LAMPSTAND

Remember how God told Moses to make a lampstand of pure gold to light the Holy Place? This is a picture of Jesus who said:

"I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." John 8:12 NASB

Jesus wants to lead people out of the darkness of sin into the light of eternal life.

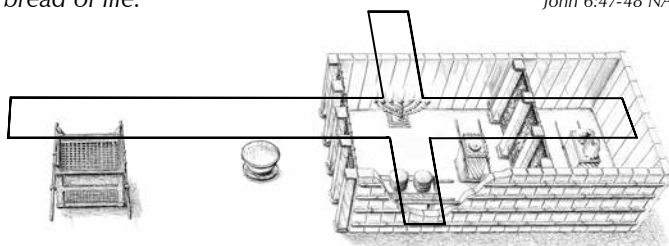
THE TABLE WITH THE BREAD

Remember how God told Moses to make a table and place on it 12 loaves of bread, each representing one of the 12 tribes of Israel? Again, this is a picture of Jesus who said:

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." John 6:35 NKJV

Just as the 12 loaves were a picture of sufficient bread for everyone in Israel, so Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. As the bread of life, he offers us eternal life.

"Truly... I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life." John 6:47-48 NASB



THE CURTAIN

Think again of how God instructed Moses to hang a thick curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Sinful man was barred from entering God's holy presence.

Scripture says we are separated from God and cannot come into his presence because of our sin. We are **ESTRANGED** from God and his love.

But then Jesus came. Scripture tells us that the Tabernacle curtain was a picture of his physical body. When he died on the cross, the curtain was ripped in two from top to bottom. No man could have torn the veil, but God tore it to illustrate Jesus' body being sacrificed for you and me. Now by putting our trust in him, Scripture says our sin is forgiven and we can boldly enter into God's presence. The relationship has been restored.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance...

Hebrews 10:19–20, 22 NIV

But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:13 NET

Man was not accepted back simply as a friend. Scripture tells us that man was adopted into God's family as a full member.

In the Roman world of Jesus' day, *adoption* was the legal rite of "investing sonship." In our modern society, a child born into a family is automatically recognized as having all the rights and privileges of that family. But in a world where men had wives, concubines and mistresses, as well as children by their slaves, a child was not a legal heir until invested with that sonship in a separate action. Once adopted as a son, he was a full member of the family.

So it is with us. We who once were **ESTRANGED** from God's love, have now become members of God's family—as **SONS**.

Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba [Daddy], Father." So you are no longer a slave [to sin and Satan], but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Galatians 4:6-7 NIV

THE ATONEMENT COVER

The atonement cover was that special lid on the Ark of the Covenant which was located in the Holy of Holies. It was here that the high priest brought the blood once a year on the Day of Atonement. God gave the Israelites a way to escape judgment of their sin through the shed blood of an innocent lamb. In the same way, Jesus is now our atonement cover and through his shed blood, we can escape eternal death. No longer does man need to offer lambs for a sacrifice. Jesus was the final sacrifice. God says:

*"**Their sins** and lawless acts **I will remember no more.**" And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.*

Hebrews 10:17-18 NIV

With Jesus' death on the cross, the last Lamb had died. Since the beginning of history, it had been God's plan that the way of escape would be provided through Jesus. The sacrifices had only been a picture of what was to come; they could not take away sin.

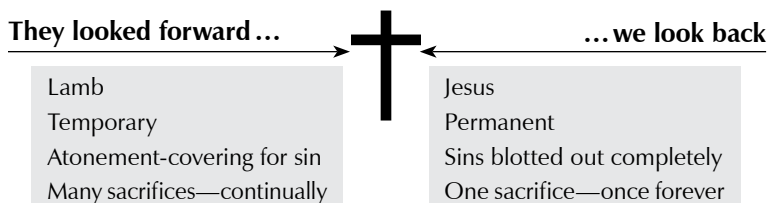
But now it was no longer necessary to offer any kind of sacrifice, because Jesus' blood paid the sin-debt once for all.

*We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**.*

*Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus] had offered **for all time** one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.*

Hebrews 10:10-12 NIV

14-N ▶ God accepted the animals because he was looking forward in history to the time when Jesus would die as the final sacrifice. 0:42 When Jesus died, he did more than cover sin for a year. He blotted it out from God's sight forever. On the cross he cried, "It is finished!" The final Lamb has been found.



Jesus may have told his disciples many more things about himself that are illustrated in the Tabernacle, for it is a visual aid of incredible detail, full of comparisons. You can be sure that what Jesus did tell them was unforgettable.

MOSES AND THE BRONZE SERPENT

Recall how the Israelites sinned and God sent the snakes. They cried out for deliverance, so God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it up in the middle of the camp. To be healed, all the people had to do was to LOOK at the serpent. There was nothing else they could do.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

John 3:14-18 ESV

Man is born into this world *condemned already*. We are like the Israelites who have been bitten by snakes. We are as good as *dead*. We have no relationship with God; our bodies will eventually die and after death, we will face punishment in the Lake of Fire.

But then Jesus entered the picture. He paid the sin-debt with his own death. However, Jesus did not remain dead—he came back to life. If we look to him in faith, just as the Israelites looked to the bronze snake, then he gives us spiritual life. Just as he came back to life, we become spiritually *alive*, both now and for eternity. Scripture speaks of this as being *born again*.

*When you were **dead** in your sins ... God made you **alive** with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

Colossians 2:13 NIV

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us **alive** with Christ even when we were **dead** in transgressions [or sin].*

Ephesians 2:4-5 NIV

Once spiritually DEAD, we are now ALIVE and will dwell forever in Heaven with our Creator.

5 THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

— JOHN TO THE RESURRECTION —

As Jesus systematically explained to the disciples the significance of the events recorded in Scripture, it is probable that he elaborated on even more accounts than we have considered. No doubt, his disciples had keen interest in the subjects with which they had first-hand experience.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Scripture says:

All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way.

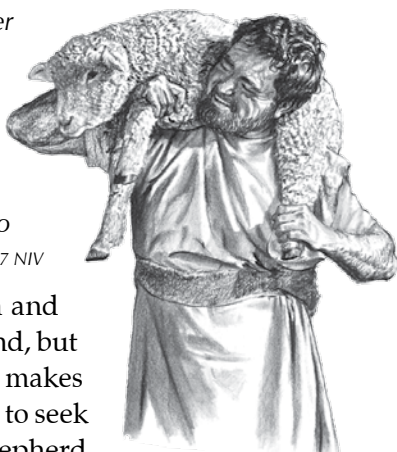
Isaiah 53:6 NASB

Man chose to go his own way, taking a path that led him into a spiritual wilderness. Scripture says that man is LOST.

But then Jesus came looking for us. While on earth he told a parable that describes God's concern.

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls

his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." Luke 15:4-7 NIV



God could have stayed in Heaven and forever turned his back on mankind, but that isn't what happened. Scripture makes it clear that Jesus took the initiative to seek us out and then, as the good shepherd, went much further.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep."

John 10:11 NLT

That is exactly what Jesus did. *He died in our place, to pay our sin-debt.* That is love in all its perfection. Yes, God is love, but not without tremendous cost. When Jesus was on the cross he cried out:

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Mark 15:34 NKJV

Jesus didn't just die a physical death, there was also a spiritual dimension. *Sin demands separation.* In those desperate hours on the cross, Jesus experienced an awful separation from God the Father as he took the sins of the world on himself.

Scripture says that the sky grew dark although it was midday. It seems as though the Father did not want the world to see the agony the Son went through as Jesus bore our sin, became our substitute Lamb and died. God allowed it; indeed, he planned it. Just as the prophet Abraham had agonizingly raised the knife to slay his beloved son, so God laid the punishment for our sins on his Son. Abraham's son was spared death, but God's eternal Son was not spared. He was the perfect and final sacrifice.

14-O
3:39

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

Scripture says:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us ... 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

This verse is not saying that Jesus became a sinner. The word *sin* has the idea of a "sin-offering." God made Jesus, who had no sin, to be a sin-offering for us. When Jesus took our sin, God

poured out on him all the fury of his rightful anger against sin. Then Jesus was able to do something we could not do. He said “It is finished!” If we had paid our own sin-debt, we would have gone on and on paying—for eternity. We could never have said “it is finished.” But Jesus paid it all. The rest of the verse reads:

...so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

It’s “in him” we find righteousness! It’s not ours. God gives us His *righteousness*. It’s the greatest of all exchanges. On the cross, Jesus took our foul, loathsome sin and then when we trust him, he gives us his clean, pure righteousness. No longer do we need the blood of a lamb to cover our sin; we are clothed in something far better, the righteousness of Christ. Remember that age-old question asked by the prophet Job?

“How can a man be righteous before God?”

Job 9:2 NKJV

How can man get rid of his sin and gain a *righteousness equal to God’s righteousness* so he can be accepted in God’s presence? The complete answer is found in this one verse. Read it again.

God made him who had no sin to be [a] sin [offering] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

THE RESURRECTION

Jesus died, yes, but he didn’t stay dead like the prophets of the past. Jesus came back to life to prove that death had no power over him. He said:

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.”

John 10:17-18 NIV

The Romans have been blamed for executing Jesus, and the religious leaders for pressuring them to do it. Such a perception is completely false. Scripture states clearly that it was *Jesus* who voluntarily laid down his life. No one forced him to die against his will. It was his choice, motivated by his love for us. The truth of the matter is that the sins of the whole world were responsible for nailing Jesus to the cross.

The resurrection was a powerful display that God’s *just* nature was satisfied with Jesus’ death on our behalf. The payment had been made and accepted as sufficient! The grave could not hold him

in its clutches. He had victory over death! Jesus had broken sin's grip, defeated Satan's power and removed death's terrible finality.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15 NET

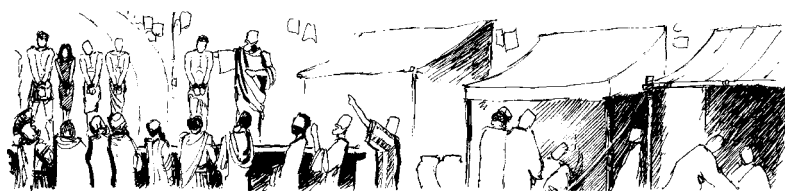
REDEEMED

For centuries, man had been a SLAVE to Satan's will. Through blatant lies, imitation of the truth, even the denial of his own existence, Satan manipulated mankind for his own purposes. But even independent of Satan's influence, man could not live a perfect life. Man was a SLAVE to sin.

But then Jesus came and REDEEMED us. It is difficult for us to grasp the rich significance connected with this word if we do not understand its association with ancient slavery.

A wealthy man would go to the slave market to buy a slave. There he would see the captives chained, humbled and broken, each being sold for a given sum. The man would pay the asking price and the slave would become his.

So far, this was nothing unusual, but now the story takes an interesting twist. On rare occasions, the new owner would then take his new slave out of the slave market, break off his chains and set him free. When this happened, it was said the slave had been REDEEMED.



That is what Jesus did for us. We were bound by the chains of sin and Satan in the slave market of life. We were helpless to deliver ourselves. But then Jesus came and purchased us, paying the price with his own blood. He then took us out of the market, broke off the chains and set us free.

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were **redeemed** from the empty way of life... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV

*In him we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.* Ephesians 1:7 NIV

THE SHEEP PEN

▶ 14-P
0:53

Now let's continue with the analogy Jesus used in describing us as sheep. Remember how at night, a good shepherd would sleep in the entrance of the sheep pen to protect the flock? Jesus said:

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."

John 10:9 NIV

The pen had only one gate. In the same way, Jesus is the only door to eternal life. There is no other way to be saved from sin.

Just as there was only one way in which Cain and Abel could approach God;

... just as there was only one door to safety in Noah's boat;

... just as there was only one door to the Tabernacle;

... and just as there is only one door to a sheep pen, so Jesus is the only way to God.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12 ESV

As the disciples listened to Jesus teach from the Law and the Prophets, they must have had premonitions of the consequences of his message. They lived in the Roman Empire. The Romans were tolerant of other religions up to a point, but they had also come to believe that Caesar was a god. The Romans wouldn't object to Jesus being presented as *another* way to God, but to teach what Jesus taught—that he is the *only* way—would jeopardize their lives. According to extra-biblical sources, all but one of the 11 original disciples were put to death for this message. They died for what they knew to be true. The eleventh was exiled.

THE PHARISEES

▶ 14-Q
1:27

The Pharisees, of all people, were impeccably religious. They had an extensive list of dos and don'ts.

Today, one of the most common misconceptions about life is that people can earn their way to Heaven by doing enough good to outweigh their bad.

The Pharisees were very religious, but Jesus condemned both their lives and their teaching as being misleading. Jesus said that the only true way to God was by faith in him.

We put faith into practice every day. You are probably applying a principle of faith right now. If you are sitting in a chair, you are trusting in the chair to hold you up without collapsing. It's doubtful that you sat down thinking, *"I am going to trust this chair to be sturdy,"* but nonetheless you exercised faith in the chair. In a sense, faith in itself is neutral. What is important is this: in *what* or in *whom* are you placing your trust? The chair may collapse—but then it's only a chair. However, if you are placing your faith in Jesus having paid your sin-debt, then you can have absolute confidence he has done just that. He has promised.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

14-R
0:45



Scripture says we are saved from the consequences of sin through faith in Jesus Christ. This salvation is a “gift” from God. We didn't have to earn it by any religious act or good work.

Gifts are free. If you work for a gift, it is no longer a gift. *Gifts in the truest sense are undeserved.*

If we feel we deserve it, then it ceases to be a gift and becomes an award. The eternal life God gives us is truly a gift because we don't deserve it in any way.

The Pharisees were convinced their good deeds would please God. But God says that if he accepted people based on what they themselves did, then people would boast about their goodness. He saves us from judgment, not based on how good we are, but on the basis of his gift to us.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 ESV

FAITH ALONE

How do we receive God's gift? We receive it by placing our faith in who God is and what he has done for us—facts we find in the Bible. We personally believe these facts to be true.

We believe Jesus died in our place for our sin.

We believe God's justice was satisfied by that death.

We believe God no longer views our sin; rather, he views us clothed in Jesus' righteousness.

We believe God gives us the gift of eternal life.

Placing our faith in these facts, believing them to be true, is not blind faith. It's faith that is built on the facts of God's Word.

Some people add a spiritual aura to faith. It becomes quantified. You either have a lot of faith or just a little. But that thinking confuses the issue. Putting faith in what Jesus did on the cross for us is similar to a drowning man nodding vigorously to his rescuer when the lifesaver says, "Will you trust me to save you?" The size of the nod is immaterial. The point is *not* the nod at all. The point is that the drowning man is acknowledging and trusting in the lifeguard to rescue him. For the drowning man to later claim his big nod saved his life would be ludicrous. So it is with us. We are to trust in Jesus to save us from our sin, but the size of our trust is not what saves us; it is what Jesus did for us by dying on the cross.

*For in the gospel a **righteousness from God** is revealed, a **righteousness that is by faith from first to last.*** Romans 1:17 NIV

In continuing the analogy of a drowning man, it is also important to know that you are drowning. If you think you are floating just fine, you will reject all help. Even if you know you are drowning but are too proud to ask for help, you will drown all the same. Others may see that you are floundering, but they will be unable to help you until you allow them. It's the same spiritually. You must see yourself as a helpless sinner before you can be saved from your sin-debt. That's the starting point.

Scripture is full of illustrations of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done. We can only conjecture which illustrations Jesus used as he taught the disciples. Undoubtedly, he used most or all of the ones we have considered. He probably used more. When he had finished teaching, the room must have been silent. The question which remained for Jesus' disciples is the same question which remains for us. In what are you placing your faith? In your religion, your ideas, or in the fact that Jesus died in your place to pay your sin-debt? In whom are you finding your righteousness? Yourself and your good deeds, or in the person of Jesus Christ?



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1 ALL THAT THE **P**ROPHETS HAVE **S**POKEN

2 **J**ESUS **R**ETURNS TO **H**EAVEN

3 DO YOU **B**ELIEVE THE **P**ROPHETS?

VIDEOS

goodseed.com/atp/15.html



1 ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN

Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, God had the prophet Isaiah write these words. Read them carefully and see if you can interpret this prophetic passage of Scripture.

Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. *Isaiah 53 ESV*

This is one of many prophetic passages that give specific information concerning the Messiah who was to come. It's no wonder that Jesus, in speaking to the two disciples, said:

“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

Luke 24:25-26 ESV

Would he say the same to us?

2 JESUS RETURNS TO HEAVEN

In the days immediately following Jesus’ resurrection, he spent time with his disciples and ...

...showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:3 NIV

Exactly 40 days after his resurrection, Jesus took his disciples back to familiar ground, just two miles from Jerusalem.

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.

Luke 24:50-51 NIV

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Acts 1:10-11 NIV

The angels said Jesus would come again. If we were to study the Bible further, we would see that it has much to say about that future event. Just as God kept his promise related to prophecies about his first coming, we can be assured he will keep his word regarding his second coming. He always does.

The rest of the Bible records the events surrounding the lives of the disciples who became known as *apostles*. These followers of Jesus told multitudes of people about him.

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of [temple] priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:7 NIV

Even priests who had been instrumental in Jesus’ death believed. But not everyone was convinced and, just as the disciples must have anticipated, there was resistance. One particularly ardent Jesus-hater was a young Pharisee named Saul. Saul was zealous in following the laws and traditions of his religion. He *thought*

he believed the prophets, but in fact, he had never understood their message. He decided that Jesus' disciples must be silenced.

Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. Acts 9:1–5 NIV

This was the beginning of a most remarkable life. Saul changed radically. He stopped killing believers and became one himself. The tables turned and the persecutor became the persecuted. On one occasion he was stoned with rocks and left for dead. Three times he was beaten with rods, five times whipped, three times shipwrecked. One time he floated on the sea for 24 hours. All of this occurred as Saul tried to tell others about his own belief that Jesus was the Promised Saviour about whom all the prophets wrote.

3 DO YOU BELIEVE THE PROPHETS?

There are those who after reading the Bible and understanding what it has to say, decide to take a risk. They decide not to believe it.

▶ 15-A
5:18

They choose to:

Ignore its message;

Reject it outright;

Get busy with life, and thereby forget it;

Water down its message;

...and they hope the Scriptures are wrong.

Herod Agrippa took such a risk. As the grandson of Herod the Great and nephew of Herod Antipas, he must have been privy to the gossip about Jesus in the royal household. No doubt, spies had reported every word the prophet from Nazareth spoke. But Herod had status; he was an important man. Rather than humble himself before the King of Kings, he continued to live his life for himself. He even gained an element of popularity by beheading one of Jesus' disciples. But then:

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. Acts 12:21-23 NIV

God in his grace will tolerate sin for awhile, but then in his justice he will judge it. Judgment may come in this life or it may be withheld until after death, but it will happen. Herod died and faced an eternity in the Lake of Fire. The next verse is noteworthy:

But the word of God continued to increase and spread. Acts 12:24 NIV

Another contemporary of Jesus was Herod Agrippa II. As the great-grandson of Herod the Great and son of Herod Agrippa, he would also have known about Jesus. The Bible says King Agrippa was well-versed in all the things concerning Jesus. Saul, now known as the apostle Paul, was arrested and testified before him. In his defense before Agrippa, Paul told him about Jesus. He said:

*"I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that he would be the first to rise from the dead and would proclaim light to the people and to the Gentiles. ... For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, **do you believe the prophets?**"*

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." Acts 26:22-23, 26-28 NKJV

King Agrippa seemed to understand Paul quite well, so much so he even admitted that Paul had almost persuaded him to believe. But Agrippa took the risk. He didn't believe. He sidestepped the message of the prophets in an effort to avoid making a decision. As far as we know, Agrippa never did believe. He went to his grave *understanding*, but not believing. It was his choice.

Paul also defended himself before a Roman governor named Felix. Paul always took these opportunities to give a lengthy explanation of who Jesus was and what he had done.

Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said,

*“That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient,
I will send for you.”*

Acts 24:24-25 NIV

Felix put off his decision. He was waiting for a more convenient time. It’s easy to do that, but the Bible reminds us that *now* is the time to decide.

Now is the accepted time; . . . now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6:2 NKJV

Neither biblical nor secular history records what happened to Felix, but to the best of our knowledge he never did find a convenient time to believe.

Saul, Herod Agrippa, Agrippa II, Felix—all these men made a choice. It’s the same choice we face.

Do you believe [the message of] the prophets...? *Acts 26:27 NET*

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY

SELECTING A COPY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

A COMMON QUESTION

RESOURCES

END NOTES

GLOSSARY

- Abba:** (Aramaic) equivalent to the English words *daddy* or *papa*
- Adoption:** the rite of investing legal sonship, complete with its obligations and privileges
- Altar:** a platform made of earth or rocks upon which sacrifices were offered to God or gods
- Amen:** (Hebrew/Greek) a word of affirmation; a form of agreement: "That's right!" or "I agree!"
- Angel:** (Greek) messenger; a created heavenly spirit being
- Anoint:** to pour oil upon the person's head or on an object for the purpose of setting apart for God's use. The word came to mean or refer to anything chosen for the LORD's service.
- Apostle:** (Greek) a "sent one"; used most often in reference to the 12 disciples and Paul
- Ark:** a container; either large, such as a boat, or small, such as a box
- Blessing:** the receiving or giving of God's favour
- Centurion:** (Greek/Latin) a Roman army officer responsible for 100 men
- Christ:** (Greek) the Anointed One, translated *Messiah* (Hebrew) in the Old Testament
- Confess:** to agree with or acknowledge
- Covenant:** a promise, agreement
- Curse:** to incur or bestow displeasure
- Demon:** a created evil spirit being who gives allegiance to Satan
- Devil:** (derived from Greek) false accuser, slanderer; another name for Satan, the most powerful of all evil spirit beings
- Disciple:** a follower
- Faith:** to trust or put confidence in (see pages 99-100)
- Genesis:** (Greek) beginnings or origins
- Glorify:** literally "to have weight," as in the sense of worth
- Gospel:** good news
- Grace:** God's kindness to undeserving sinners
- Holy Spirit:** Not an angel or a man, but the very Spirit of God himself
- I AM:** a name of God, meaning "the self-existent one" or "the one who exists by his own power"
- Immanuel:** (Hebrew/Greek) God with us
- Jesus:** (Greek, derived from Hebrew) means Saviour, Deliverer
- Justified:** a judicial act whereby God declares a person righteous in his sight
- Mercy:** God's love demonstrated towards undeserving sinners; pity
- Messiah:** (Hebrew) the Anointed One, translated *Christ* (Greek) in the New Testament
- Parable:** a short story with a lesson
- Pharisee:** a Jew who followed God's Law meticulously to the point of creating additional laws so as not to break God's Laws
- Priest:** a man who performed assigned duties in the Tabernacle or Temple
- Prophet:** a messenger who spoke for God
- Psalm:** (Greek) a song

Rabbi: (Greek) teacher, master

Redeem: to buy, as in the sense of purchasing a slave in a market

Repent: to have a change of mind (see page 149)

Righteous: to be viewed as right with God. This does not mean that a person is sinless. Can also be used in the sense of how one lives; of having a good or right sort of lifestyle.

Sabbath: the seventh day of the week; Saturday

Sanhedrin: (Greek) a Jewish court comprised of 71 men

Satan: (Hebrew/Greek) adversary; the supreme enemy of God

Saviour: someone who delivers or rescues another

Scribe: one who made copies of the Scriptures in ancient times

Sin: has the idea of shooting an arrow and missing the mark, in this case aiming for God's holiness, but falling short; to despise God and his Word; refusing to live as God intended

Sin Nature: sometimes referred to as the *human nature* or *Adam's nature*; a condition

Son of God: an idiomatic term, having no physical implications, used to designate the same attributes (see page 165-166)

Son of Man: a phrase used by Jesus in reference to himself to emphasize his humanity; also understood by ancient scholars to be a term referring to Messiah (see pages 166-167)

Synagogue: (Greek) assemblies; commonly used in reference to the building

Transgression: see "Sin"

Worship: to declare God's worth

SELECTING A COPY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Scripture was written in the common language of each generation: Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. God intended it to be accessible to every man, woman and child regardless of their background or social status. Since the age of Greek civilization, translations were made in other languages.

Any time you translate a message from one language to another, the accuracy and readability will have its strengths and weaknesses. Fortunately, translations of Scripture are usually done with meticulous care, so that what we have today is very accurate.

To help explain the Word of God in greater detail, many versions come with cross-references, notes on customs, maps, and so forth—all listed under the category as Bible helps. These are helpful, but remember, they are nothing more than man's comments on the text, and are not the Scriptures themselves.

A COMMON QUESTION

Many folks ask: *"If a person trusts in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, does this mean he can live as he pleases—do evil things—and still go to Heaven when he dies?"* Scripture answers this question.

Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!

We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Romans 6:1-2

The message of the Messiah's death and resurrection is God's righteous plan to deliver sinners from sin. If you trust in him with a sincere faith, the Word of God teaches that two wonderful things happen:

1. Deliverance from the **penalty** of sin: God forgives all of your sins based on Jesus' full payment for sin.
2. Deliverance from the **power** of sin: God's Holy Spirit comes and lives inside you. The Holy Spirit renews your heart and you begin to have a new outlook on life, by which you hate evil and love righteousness.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away—look, what is new has come!

2 Corinthians 5:17 NET

The fruit of the Spirit [in the life of the disciple of Christ] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23 NET

Jesus Christ . . . gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good!

Titus 2:13-14 NIV

RESOURCES

Due to the range of issues covered in any list of books, videos, websites or magazines, by policy GoodSeed does not issue specific endorsements. Nonetheless, at the time of writing, the following resources contained helpful information on creation/evolution and other Bible/science issues. The following list is representative of many other sources.

WEBSITES: www.AnswersInGenesis.org www.creation.com www.icr.org

MAGAZINES: *Creation Magazine*—available from www.creation.com.
Answers Magazine—available from www.AnswersInGenesis.org.

BOOKS:

- An Ice Age Caused by the Genesis Flood* by Michael J. Oard, ICR, El Cajon, CA, 243 pp.
Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils by Marvin L. Lubenow, Baker Bk House, Grand Rapids, MI, 295 pp.
Creation and Change: Genesis 1.1-2.4 in the light of changing scientific paradigms Douglas F. Kelly, Christian Focus Pub., Ross-shire, GB, 272 pp.
Creation: Facts of Life by Gary Parker, Master Bks, Green Forest, AR, 215 pp.
Darwin's Black Box by Michael J. Behe, Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, NY, NY, 307 pp.
Darwin's Enigma: Ebbing the Tide of Naturalism by L. Sunderland, MBks, Grn Fst, AR, 192 pp.
Evolution: A Theory in Crisis, New Developments in Science are Challenging Orthodox Darwinism by Michael Denton, Adler & Adler, Pub., Inc., Bethesda, MD, 368 pp.
Evolution: The Fossils Still Say NO! by Duane T. Gish, ICR, El Cajon, CA, 391 pp.
Genesis Record by Dr. Henry M. Morris, Baker Bk House, Grand Rapids, MI, 716 pp.
Ice Cores and the Age of the Earth by Larry Vardiman, Ph.D., ICR, El Cajon, CA, 72 pp.
In the Minds of Men: Darwin & the New World Order by I. Taylor, TFE Pub., Minn., MN, 498 pp.
Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study by John Woodmorappe, ICR, El Cajon, CA, 306 pp.
Refuting Evolution: A Response to the National Acad. of Sciences' Teaching About Evolution & the Nature of Sciences by J. Sarfati, Ph.D., Master Bks, Green Forest, AR, 143 pp.
The Age of the Earth's Atmosphere: A Study of the Helium Flux through the Atmosphere by Larry Vardiman, Ph.D., ICR, El Cajon, CA, 32 pp.
The Controversy: Roots of the Creat.-Evol. Conflict by D. Chittick, Creation Cps, 280 pp.

The Long War Against God: The History and Impact of the Creation/Evolution Conflict by Henry M. Morris, Baker Bk House, Grand Rapids, MI, 344 pp.

The Modern Creation Trilogy: Scripture & Creation (Three Volume Series) by Henry M. Morris and John D. Morris, Master Bks, Inc, Green Forest, AR, 228 pp.

The Mythology of Modern Dating Methods: Why million/billion-year results are not credible by John Woodmorappe, M.A. Geology, B.A. Biology, ICR, El Cajon, CA, 118 pp.

The Revised & Expanded Answers Book: The 20 Most-Asked Questions about Creation, Evolution, and the Book of Genesis, Answered! by Ken Ham, Jonathan Sarfati, Carl Wieland, edited by Don Batten, Ph.D, Master Bks, Green Forest, AR, 274 pp.

VIDEOS:

Evidences: The Record and the Flood Geoscience Rsch. Inst., LL, CA, Rev & Hld Pub. Assoc.

From a Frog to a Prince Co-prod. by Keziah, Inst. for Creation Research & Answers in Genesis.

Mount St. Helens: Explosive Evidence for Catastrophe Steve Austin, Ph.D., ICR, El Caj., CA

The Genesis Solution Ken Ham, Films for Christ, Mesa, AZ

The Grand Canyon Catastrophe: New Evidence of the Genesis Flood Prod. by Keziah & distrib. by American Portrait Films, Cleveland, OH

The Young Age of the Earth American Portrait Films, Cleveland, OH

Journeys to the Edge of Creation: (2 Vol.) Moody Inst. of Science, Chicago IL

The Wonders of God's Creation: (3 Vol.) Moody Inst. of Science, Chicago, IL

END NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, comp. Bill Wilson (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993) 27-28
2. Some English Bibles translate "God-breathed" as *inspired*. "God-breathed" is the more literal translation.
3. *And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men.* Mark 2:3 NASB
4. J.D. Douglas, ed., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (Great Britain: IVP, 1980), 1538
5. Mark R. Norton, "Texts & Manuscripts of the Old Testament," in *The Origin of the Bible*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1992), 151ff.
6. William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Josephus*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 776

CHAPTER TWO

1. The galaxy pictured here is not the Milky Way, as it is impossible to photograph. A similar one, the Andromeda, has been substituted.
2. Terence Dickinson, *NightWatch: A Practical Guide to Viewing the Universe* (Richmond Hill: Firefly, 1999). The estimated number of galaxies continues to grow.
3. Jude 6
4. Luke 20:36. Death in the physical sense. Angels never cease to exist.
5. Mark 12:25
6. *Lucifer* is Latin for "light bearer." It has its source in the Latin name for the planet Venus, which is often referred to as the "morning star."

CHAPTER THREE

1. The originally created kinds may have given rise to groups, which would subsequently be classified as separate species (e.g. dingoes, coyotes and wolves may all have descended from the one dog kind). This is not a form of evolution, as no new genetic information has been added that was not in the original ancestral population.
2. "Perfect people" as in the sense of moral perfection.
3. For an example, see: Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).
4. Geochronology is a vast area of study. A search on the Internet brings up numerous papers on different clock models.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Revelation 12:3–9; verses 3–4 are generally considered to refer to the fall of Satan. Verses 7–9 are viewed by many scholars as having to do with a yet future event. I have quoted the entire passage as the latter verses explain the portion we are concerned about—verses 3–4—and the *who* that is in question.
2. This passage reflects the choices Adam and Eve made.
3. See Romans 5:12–14 for more details. Also see Chapter Ten, end note-1. Adam was the father—the head—of the entire human race. We were *in him* when he sinned.
4. Stephen Jay Gould, "The Search for Adam and Eve," *Newsweek*, January 11, 1988, 46–52
5. *Time*, USA Ed., December 4, 1995, 29

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Some have taught that the reason why God did not accept Cain's sacrifice was because of Cain's attitude. There is no doubt that Cain had an attitude of independence from God, but the Bible clearly states: "*By faith Abel offered God a better **sacrifice** than Cain did.*" The Bible does not say "*a better **attitude**.*" Cain disobeyed God by bringing the wrong sacrifice. See Hebrews 11:4. For a paper giving extensive treatment of this subject, contact the appropriate GoodSeed office as listed in the back of the book.
2. Luke 17:27; Matthew 24:38
3. Romans 1:21–32; Though this passage does not make direct reference to the people of Noah's day, it does reflect the choices they made at the time with the attending ramifications.
4. Probably made from pine tree resin boiled with charcoal. Bituminous tar would have come into being after the flood.
5. Genesis 6:3
6. 2 Peter 2:5
7. A number of scholars have calculated the room on the ark. Here is one helpful resource: John Woodmorappe, *Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study* (El Cajon: ICR, 1996), 306
8. Job 40:15–24; 41:1–34
9. "*The Lord came down . . .*" If God is everywhere present at one time, why did he have to "come down"? The Bible often uses terms in relationship to God that enhance our understanding of the passage. For example, God is spoken of as "seeing" even though, as a Spirit, he does not have physical eyes.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Notice how lifespans decreased dramatically after the flood. Abraham was already considered old at the age of 75.
2. Abram became a great nation: the father of both the Jewish and Arab nations.
3. Abram's name did become great; he is revered by Jews and Arabs alike. It is important to note that it was God who made Abram's name great, whereas at Babel the desire was self-motivated.
4. John 8:56
5. Matthew 17:20
6. *"For the wages of sin is death..."* Romans 6:23. See Chap 4, Death, p. 62.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The 12 tribes of Israel are the 12 sons of Jacob. Exceptions: There was no tribe of Levi since they became the nation's religious leaders. There was also no tribe of Joseph—his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, made up the difference.
2. This word can be translated "lice."

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Exodus 14:1 to 15:21
2. This paragraph is a loose paraphrase of Exodus 19:5.

CHAPTER NINE

1. I am not advocating this approach as an accepted way of saving a drowning man. It is used only as an illustration.
2. ① The bronze altar: Exodus 27:1-2
 ② The basin: Exodus 30:18
 ③ The lampstand: Exodus 25:31
 ④ The table with the bread of the presence: Exodus 25:23,30
 ⑤ The golden altar or the altar of incense: Exodus 30:1,3
 ⑥ The Ark of the Covenant: Exodus 25:10-11
 ⑦ The atonement cover or mercy seat: Exodus 25:17-21
3. The priests could not enter when the pillar of cloud hovered over the Holy of Holies. It signified God's presence. When the cloud moved to lead them on the journey, then they would have been free to pack up the entire Tabernacle and follow.
4. 2 Samuel 7:12-17
5. Scholars differ somewhat on the exact dates associated with creation, the Noahic flood and Babel. Taking the Bible at face value does rule out periods of time involving millions or billions of years. All three of these events had to have happened in a period of time of not more than a few thousand years.

CHAPTER TEN

1. This should not be thought of as being some sort of genetic link—that the sin nature can be found in a string of DNA. The association is purely spiritual. God held man responsible for the rebellion in the garden of Eden, and because of that *"just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."* (Romans 5:12) We all have a human father, therefore we are all sinful. Jesus' Father was God, the Holy Spirit, so he had God's nature.

2. "Lord" is an Old Testament title for Messiah (Ps. 110:1) and emphasizes his authority, his right to rule. J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 61
3. A fragrant perfume
4. This could have been the time of Jesus' bar mitzvah. The Talmud says "at the age of puberty." Some place it a year later.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. John was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. John had spoken against Herod's sin, that of living with his half-brother's wife.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. There is a distinction: "Then death and Hades [Hell] were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death." *Revelation 20:14*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish ruling council.
2. I have not included all the details of the trial and crucifixion. Of some significance, at this point, is this event: "As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus." *Luke 23:26*
3. William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 720
4. J. W. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 604
5. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (New Delhi: SP, 1983), 340
 J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 487
 Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (New Delhi: SP, 1989), 384
6. A battalion is an army unit consisting of 300 to 1000 men.
7. The exact sequence of the resurrection morning events is not recorded. I have given one of the more likely scenarios.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9:00 a.m.—the time of the morning sacrifice. He died at 3:00 p.m.—the time of the evening sacrifice.
2. Jesus' perfect life qualified him to be a suitable sacrifice, but it was his death that made the payment for sin. Only by dying could it be said that Jesus had fulfilled the demands of the Law (Matthew 5:17-18).

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