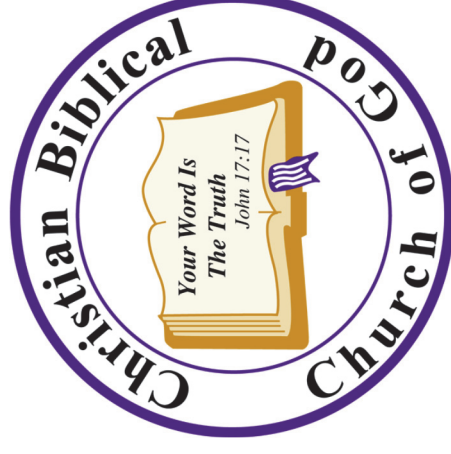


Does the Bible Really Say *That*?



by
Duncan MacLeod

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Conclusion: **What Do We Do About It?**

I am assured that you, the reader, have proven the Bible to be the Word of God (or you probably wouldn't have started to read this booklet in the first place). And now, hopefully, you're determined to know what the Bible *truly does* teach. To that end, we've examined nearly a score of erroneous ideas that self-styled biblical scholars and religious preachers insist on teaching about the Bible. We've repeatedly seen commonly held ideas of what the Bible supposedly says disproved from clear Scriptures. Except as otherwise noted, all Bible passages have been quoted from *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order*. If you prefer a different translation, by all means check and compare what we've quoted with your own Bible—keeping an open mind to what God is truly teaching you.

Once you've done that, the decision rests with you as to what you will *do* with the knowledge you've learned from the Bible. May God, whose existence you have proved, guide and inspire you to make the right choice—for the sake of your eternal salvation.

to that problem, epitomizes the intolerant ways of evolutionary dogmatists. The incipency problem has been in the last edition of *Origin of Species* since 1872 and [still it] has yet to be entered into science textbooks.... Objective science finds no evidence standing for evolution to the exclusion of any other explanation for that evidence, and it finds also that evolution fails predictions again and again.”⁶

Many scientists have voiced their dissent from Darwin’s theory of evolution. Several of them have been quoted in my previous works. Now, from Finland, a newly published work by another scientist, Matti Leisola, shows just how tenuous the basis for belief in Darwinian evolution really is. After quoting a fanciful account of the supposed beginnings of life found in a typical high school textbook, Leisola comments: “Such imaginative storytelling about the origin of life, also referred to as *chemical evolution*, has a long history. A decade after *The Origin of Species* appeared, German evolutionist Ernst Haeckel made drawings depicting the spontaneous origin of life, including what he speculated was the reproductive cycle of imaginary single-celled organisms he called *monera*. What he depicted there had not been discovered at that time, and they have not been discovered since, for the simple reason that they did not and do not exist. They were only the wishful thinking of a committed materialist.”⁷

There is no need to alter any findings of *true* science to make them conform to correctly understood Scripture. However, with *false theories* by scientists—such as Darwin’s scientifically disproved theory of evolution—we should expect the Bible to disagree. And it does.

Does the Bible Really Say That?

Introduction

This book is needed for several reasons: Too many theologians have misled believers as to what the Bible *actually teaches*. Meanwhile, non-believers wrongly blame the Bible for crazy, unsubstantiated beliefs (or bizarre practices) by professing Christians—which in turn leads non-believers to conclude that they want no part of such “Christianity.”

Another reason for this book is that hostile atheists often claim the Bible says one thing or another when, in fact, it does *not*. (And they themselves are no more competent to be declaring what the Bible says than you or I would be to lecture on quantum physics.) Then there are those who simply dismiss the Bible with the assertion, “Aw, you can make the Bible say anything you want it to.”

Wrong! The fact is, no one can “make” the Bible say anything except what it *actually does* say! But clever teachers of religion certainly know how to make the Bible *seem* to say what *they* want it to—by selectively quoting an isolated passage or two that apparently supports their false doctrine, while conveniently ignoring the many other verses that would clearly disprove that idea.

Today, professing Christianity and whole church organizations are awash in erroneous ideas that do *not* come from the Bible. Granted, many churches don’t even claim that their main source of doctrine is the Bible anyway (contrary to what outsiders may assume). But any church or teacher that does claim to get their beliefs from the Bible needs to be sure of what it actually does say—and what it does *not* say. While countless church organizations require prospective members to accept and believe certain fundamental doctrines, there are hundreds of sects and denominations with creeds that disagree with one another—and,

⁶ Hedtke, *Op. Cit.*, p. 24

⁷ Matti Leisola and Jonathan Witt, *Heretic, One Scientist’s Journey From Darwin to Design*

more importantly, disagree with the Bible. Can any of them be correct?

If you've become convinced that the Bible is true and is the Word of God, you next need to establish with certainty what it actually does teach and what it does not teach. You need the *truth*; your salvation could depend on it. In this volume, we'll explore many accepted teachings of churches professing to be Christian, and then contrast those teachings with the clear words of Scripture. We'll also look at some things that non-believers claim are in the Bible—which in fact are *not there*.

The Bible itself gives us an important principle by which to evaluate and understand its true teaching. This principle is found in Isaiah 28:10. "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little." What Isaiah the prophet is telling us here is that God's entire teaching on any important issue is *not* going to be found all in one place. We must never try to establish a doctrinal teaching on just one Bible passage. Also, it's essential to read any important verse in its *context* and recognize who is saying it, what the actual subject is, and to whom it is addressed.

In this volume, the general format we follow will be to state the unscriptural assertion first, then to contrast it with the correctly quoted Bible passages that refute that false teaching. Doing your own independent personal Bible study, you can and should check and confirm these scriptures in your own Bible. —

Duncan MacLeod

Concerning the *straightness* of most dinosaur tracks in nearly all places they're found, the writer concludes: "These unusual characteristics of dinosaur track-ways do not fit into the uniformitarian paradigm of slow, gradual processes over millions of years. Rather, the evidence points to a time of worldwide stress on dinosaurs trying to escape rising flood waters. Indeed, wherever dinosaur bones are unearthed, the evidence predominantly suggests catastrophic entombment. Just the burial and fossilization of such massive hulks as the larger dinosaurs indicates major, *sudden* catastrophic action."⁴

What are we to conclude from all we've discussed here? The Bible does *not* claim that the earth is only 6,000 years old—as evolutionists, atheists, and young-earth creationists erroneously accuse it of saying. And it does *not* in fact conflict with the *proven facts* of science—either geology or paleontology. Nor does the Bible conflict with secular history and archaeology—as I clearly show in *How Credible Is The Bible?*

What is *true* "objective science"? Randall Hedtke puts it quite succinctly: "...theories must conform to the facts or be overthrown. Facts are not subjected to counter-induction, but theories are.

"The objective science protocol [has] made science what it is today. It popularly portrays scientists as superhumanly unbiased and trustworthy. That portrayal is not true if protocol is not followed."⁵

Does true, objective science contradict the Bible? Does Darwin's theory of evolution—which certainly *does* contradict the Bible—constitute objective science? Is any dissent from it or any alternate theory even permitted in academia? "Practitioners of evolutionary dogmatism rely on the censorship of alternative points of view and [of] unfavorable information to sell their product, and all the while claiming to be practitioners of objective science. The censorship of natural selection's incipiently problem [the sudden appearance in the fossil record of fully developed new species without any intermediate forms] and Darwin's surrender

⁴ Torrance & Neal, *Op. Cit.*, p. 21

⁵ Randall Hedtke, *Objective Science Versus Evolutionary Dogmatism*, p. 3

having occurred on the ancient earth. Also, among the more theoretic scientists, as evidence of some sort of catastrophe has become increasingly difficult to ignore, there has come to be a limited acceptance of the idea that at least the dinosaurs might have been suddenly killed off all at once—possibly by an asteroid or a meteor from space.

Some authorities on historical geology believe that the evidence in the rocks indicates that the earth for *two* different periods in the past was *completely covered with water*. As we've seen, the Bible indeed also tells us the earth was completely covered with water *twice*—once after the rebellion of Satan, and once during the flood of Noah. The only difference between the accounts of evolution-believing geologists and the Bible is the *dating* of each event—evolutionists have the two times being millions of years ago. They may well be correct that the first global deluge was indeed that long ago; but we have—based on biblical chronology—a fairly reliable date for the more recent event (the flood of Noah) of about 2369-68 BC. No doubt most of the fossil remains found in the deeper layers of the earth resulted from the first, and most widely catastrophic, of the two worldwide floods.

Consider, for instance, that most of the dinosaur remains are entombed in rock formations that are called “sedimentary.” If you remember from your middle-school general science, sedimentary rock is formed by water-borne mud deposits that subsequently hardened into rock. According to some currently held theories, the dinosaurs may have been killed by a meteor from space. While it could be that some object from space may have played a part, the main agent that killed all the predominant life forms on earth almost at once seems more likely to have been *water*—from which, as evidence shows, the larger animals were able to escape temporarily, before finally drowning.

Noting the fact that dinosaur remains, wherever they are found, are always in jumbled and disarticulated heaps, one writer points out the following: “Dinosaur graveyards are not found just in the western United States, but *worldwide*. And practically all of them indicate catastrophic burial by water or aqueous slurries.”³

CHAPTER ONE

Some Required Core Teachings of Professing Christianity

“*We each have an immortal soul.*”

Supposedly, each human being *has* an “immortal soul”—an invisible, internal, spiritual identifying consciousness, which lives on after a person’s body dies. Neo-Platonic Gnosticism expresses the concept this way: A human being has an “immortal soul trapped inside a physical body,” and physical death somehow releases that soul so that it can go to another place. In professing Christianity, this “soul” may go to one of two or three places after death: either to heaven if they’ve been “good,” to “purgatory” (for not-so-good Catholics), or to hell if they’ve been totally “bad.” In heaven, they then join God and enjoy some sort of eternal bliss. If they were so bad their soul is sent to hell, it goes to a horrible place somewhere in the bowels of the earth where they suffer eternal burning, without ever being burned up, for all eternity.

The Roman Catholic theologian Tertullian (AD 160-225) was one of the earliest to promote this idea of an ever-burning “hell.” Later in the 3rd century, another Catholic leader, Cyprian of Carthage, wrote, “The damned will burn forever in hell. Devouring flames will be their eternal portion. Their torments will never have diminution or end.”

Thus, the idea of the “damned” burning in hell forever was by no means new when a mediaeval Catholic author named Dante Alighieri, in his *Divine Comedy*, pictured this “hell” in lurid detail as the first of three stages a person is taken through to show the supposed fate of the “immortal soul” after the death of the body. The entrance to the inferno, as Dante pictures it, has a

³ Lynn Torrance & Philip Neal, *Geology, Catastrophism, and the Scriptures, Part Two*, p. 20

sign over it that says: “Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.” The reader in the whole “comedy” is conducted by the ancient *pagan* poet Virgil through first the “inferno” and then “purgatory,” where the less wicked suffer for possibly centuries in order to finally be “purged” of sins. The ultimate destination is the “beatific vision” of God in heaven. The Roman Catholic Church liked Dante’s portrayal of these mythical stages so much that they later adopted Dante’s picture of the “inferno” (and purgatory) as virtual doctrine—despite the fact that Dante pictured the soul of more than one dead Pope being in the inferno!

We must ask, does *the Bible* actually teach any of these things?

In Genesis 2:7 we read, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and **man became a living soul.**” Notice the word “became.” Does the scripture say man “received” a living soul? Does it say this soul is immortal?

The Hebrew word translated “soul” here is *nephesh*. A broader meaning of *nephesh* is “life”—physical life. There is no implication of either non-corporeality or immortality in the word *nephesh*. That is why there are many scriptures where we see people simply called “souls.” One example of that is Exodus 1:5, where it says, “And all the *souls* that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy *souls*, for Joseph was already in Egypt.” Another place where people are called “souls” is Exodus 12:4. For the word “soul,” the reader can in most cases substitute “person” or “people.” There is *no remote implication* of immortality here. Remember, as we pointed out earlier, when God breathed life into Adam’s nostrils, he *became* a living soul. He did *not* “receive” a soul, and certainly not an “immortal” one! The Bible consistently tells us that a soul is what a person *is*—not something he “has.”

Immortality is not something a human being now has; however, it is offered as the *future* reward of those who willingly become followers of Jesus Christ in obedience to God—who alone now has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16). In the future, when the saved faithful receive their reward—at the return of Christ to the

an evening and a morning (not six one-thousand-year “days,” as some have speculated). (Even a cursory knowledge of biology shows that the life forms created on one day are dependent upon those created on another.)

What was taking place here in Genesis 1? Was it not the RE-creation, the renewal, the restoration, of a badly damaged earth—which had been *made that way* by the “war in heaven” fomented by the rebellion of Satan the devil against God?

Atheists and evolutionists reject the Bible because they *assume* it says the earth is only 6,000 years old, while clear scientific evidence shows it to be far older. At the same time, young-earth creationists give “creation science” a bad name and cause it to be dismissed as “religion masquerading as science” because they fudge the time evidence—erroneously thinking they need to make everything fit into a 6,000-year time frame. As we showed clearly above, the Bible does *not* give an age for the earth. However, it *does* limit the time that mankind has been on the earth. This limited time is corroborated by both secular history and correctly dated archaeological discoveries (see my previous work, *How Credible Is The Bible?*).

There is *no need* to try to artificially harmonize objective secular truth—be it history or the empirical findings of science (whether biology, geology, or paleontology)—with correctly understood Scripture.

In the world of science, for decades, evolution-oriented geologists and paleontologists insisted on promoting the paradigm called “uniformitarianism,” the assumption that all changes shown in rocks and fossil remains had been gradual and slow—supporting of course their idea of millions of years for biological “evolution,” as imagined by Charles Darwin, to have slowly taken place. Anyone who suggested that a *catastrophe* (such as a worldwide flood) might have killed all life at any time was derided as a believer in “catastrophism.” In fairness, we should note, however, that many working geologists (such as those employed by petroleum companies) have noted during their explorations for oil or gas that there is stark evidence of past catastrophic events

of the deep? Was it not because of a *thick cloud cover*? What happened, then, when God called for light? Was it not merely a parting of the cloud cover, allowing the *already-created* sun to now shine through?

Many readers assume verses 14-19 are telling us that God waited until day 4 to create the sun, moon, and stars; but verse 1 clearly tells us that the “heavenly bodies” had already been created *before* the earth. (The evidence from proven science also tells us that the universe—including the sun and stars—*preceded* the earth. Remember, the Bible does not conflict with true science.) What we’re seeing pictured in these verses is God now *ordaining some of the functions* of those *already-created* heavenly bodies. They were to become man’s *signs* by which to reckon the passage of time.

Some who insist that God completed all the creation in the six days of Genesis 1 often cite Exodus 20, where God (in explaining the Sabbath commandment) said, “...For in six days the LORD made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them...” (Ex. 20:11). We should note, however, that the Hebrew word translated “made” in this passage is *asah*, which means fashioned from *already-existing* physical materials. The same word is later used multiple times when describing the many artifacts and components of the tabernacle the Israelites were commanded to make in the wilderness. Clearly, God did not miraculously produce these artifacts and the tabernacle. The Israelites *made* them from already-existing materials.

On the other hand, the word translated “created” in Genesis 1:1, describing what God did in the very beginning, comes from *bara*—an entirely different Hebrew word. What God did in Genesis 1:1 in bringing into being the entire universe and the earth (in that order) was not accomplished in only six days. After God created the earth habitable, it *BECAME tohu*—how much later, we’re not told. The time interval could have been only a few days; or it could have been millions of years!

But the rest of what we read in the remainder of Genesis 1 was in fact accomplished in six literal 24-hour days—each having

earth, *not before*—then and only then will some human beings *become* immortal. I Corinthians 15:53 tells us that “this mortal must **put on** immortality.” Why? Because we do NOT now have it!

If the human soul is *not* immortal, then, what does the Bible say about the present state of the dead? The short answer is, they are dead; and in the Bible “dead” means exactly what it says—DEAD—just as dead as any animal. In Ecclesiastes 3:19 we read, “For that which happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts—even one thing happens to them. As the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they all have one breath, so that a man has no advantage over a beast; for all is vanity.” Does the Bible say animals have immortal souls? No! Neither does it say humans have! Dead people’s souls have not floated off to heaven or anywhere else, and they certainly are not roasting in any mythical “hell” like Dante’s Inferno.

Both the Old and the New Testaments refer to death as being much like sleep, except with no dreaming. In Psalms 13:3, Daniel 12:2, and every place in the Old Testament where a king is said to have died, death is referred to as *sleep*. David in Psalm 6:5 says to God, “For in death there is no memory of You; in the grave, who shall give You thanks?” In Psalm 146:4, he tells us that at death a person’s “thoughts perish.” In other words, his consciousness totally ends. Solomon confirms this when he says, “The dead do not know anything” (Eccl. 9:5). The apostle Paul refers to death as “sleep” (I Cor. 11:30; 15:20, 51; I Thess. 4:14).

The dead are now completely without consciousness or awareness of anything whatsoever. But as both Job and Jesus tell us, they do have a future. That future is a *resurrection*—a bringing back to life—of every person who has ever lived and died. In Job 14:14, Job asks, “If a man die, shall he live again?” He goes on to answer his own question: “All the days of my appointed time I will wait until my change comes. You [addressing God] shall call, and I will answer You; You shall have the desire for the work of Your hands.” Jesus teaches us the same thing with more detail in John 5:28, 29: “Do not wonder at this, for the hour is

coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: those who have practiced good to a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil to a resurrection of judgment.” (We actually see two distinct resurrections pictured here, as in Revelation 20. There is another erroneous, unscriptural teaching—the idea of going to heaven or hell at death—that we will deal with later, in which we will discuss in more detail the two distinct resurrections. Suffice it to say for now that the human soul is *not* immortal.)

Jesus told His disciples, “Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to **destroy both soul and body in hell**” (Matt. 10:28, *KJV*). Note that a soul *can* be destroyed; it is not indestructible or “immortal.” Note also that while in the *future* there will be such a place as “hell,” it will not be a place of perpetual suffering as pictured by Cyprian or Dante. In that coming hell, the unrepentant soul (person) will be *destroyed*—cease to exist!

The Greek word translated “hell” here in Matthew 10 is *Gehenna*. The name was derived from a valley near Jerusalem—the Valley of Hinnom—that housed a refuse dump for trash, dead animals and even bodies of unidentified people or criminals. As with many refuse dumps, there was an almost perpetual fire burning there. The fire that ultimately will destroy the incorrigible wicked will be *like* that fire, so sometimes it is referred to in the Bible by this name—Gehenna.

We should note that a frequent error made by believers in the “immortal soul” idea is that they conflate the words “soul” and “spirit.” In Hebrew, the word “spirit” is translated from the word *ruwach*, an entirely different word from *nephesh*, translated “soul.” Likewise, in New Testament Greek, soul comes from *psuche*, while spirit is translated from *pneuma*. “Soul” and “spirit” are two different entities in the Bible and should never be confused with one another.

What is this human spirit that differs from the soul? The Bible tells us there is a “spirit in man” in both the Old Testament (Job 32:8) and the New (I Corinthians 2:11). This human spirit

“covering cherub.” But who *was* in that garden (of whom the human king of Tyre is merely a type) to tempt and mislead Adam and Eve? Was it not the “serpent,” Satan, whom we read of in Revelation 12:9?

To clarify what we’ve read in Isaiah and Ezekiel, we find this bit of history in Revelation 12:7-8: “And there was **war in heaven**; Michael and his angels warred against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels warred, but they did not prevail, neither was their place found any more in heaven.” This “war in heaven” between Satan’s forces and the angels of God explains what *caused* the earth to *become* covered with water, uninhabitable.

Returning to Genesis 1:2, what else do we notice besides a planet covered entirely with water? “...and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” In verse 3, when God said, “Let there be light,” was He just now creating the sun—after creating the earth? Some have assumed that darkness prevailed because God had not yet created the sun; but we read in verse 1 that the sun had already been created—as part of the “heavens” that were created *before* the earth. Why, then, was there still *darkness* on the face of the deep?

We get the answer in verses 6 and 7: “And God said, ‘Let there be a **firmament** in the midst of the waters and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament, and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven...” This “firmament” is not to be mistaken for the dry land—the dry land does not appear until verse 9. God called this firmament “heaven”—but this is not to be confused with outer space or the universe, which had already been created in verse 1. Whatever this “firmament” is, it has waters *under* it, and waters *above* it.

What has been created here? Is it not the atmosphere? Doesn’t the atmosphere have both waters below it (the seas) and waters above it (the clouds)? Why was there darkness on the face

We get some clues from the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. “How are you fallen from the heavens, O shining star, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations” (Isa. 14:12).

Who is this “son of the morning” who was thrown out of heaven? The King James translation uses the name “Lucifer” in this passage, but that seems to originate with the Latin Vulgate of the Roman Catholic bishop Jerome. Jesus clarifies the identity of this “exile from heaven” when He says, “**I beheld Satan fall** as lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). When did this fall occur—before or after the creation of the earth? If we can believe Job 38:4 and 7, Satan’s fall occurred *after* the creation of the earth—and as we will soon see, was the main cause of its *becoming* uninhabitable.

Let us continue in Isaiah 14:13-14: “For you have said in your heart, ‘I will ascend into the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will also sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.’”

We see more about the rebellion of Satan in Ezekiel 28, beginning with verse 12: “Son of man, lift up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘You seal up the measure of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, you have been in Eden the garden of God.... You were the anointed cherub that covers, and I have set you so; you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you.... Therefore I will cast you as profane from the mountain of God and will destroy you, O covering cherub, from among the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness. I will cast you to the ground; I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you...’” (Ezek. 28:12-17).

Clearly, the human king of Tyre who is addressed here was never in the Garden of Eden, nor was he any kind of

(which is part of every human being from conception) is not to be confused with the soul, nor is it to be confused with the *Holy Spirit* from God—which a person can receive only after repentance and conversion (more about that later).

A human being without the human spirit would be merely another animal—not having any understanding of human concepts like mathematics, history, future planning, verbal communication, engineering or design. The “spirit in man” added to the human brain is what gives us a human *mind*, rather than a mere animal brain. Paul asks, “For who among men understands the things of man except by the spirit of man which is in him?” (I Cor. 2:11). It is the addition of this “spirit of man” to the body and brain that comprises the entire human being, life, or “soul.” This soul, as we have seen, *can* completely die.

When Jesus, as a mortal man, was about to die on the cross, He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46). Where did Christ’s human spirit temporarily go? Solomon tells us: “Then the dust [the physical human body and brain at death] shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7).

Jesus’ human spirit went to the Father, while He lost all consciousness or awareness. After Christ’s body had spent a full three days and nights in the tomb, God the Father put His spirit back into Jesus’ body and resurrected Him from the dead. During those three days and nights, He was just as *dead* as any animal—not off “preaching to spirits in hell,” as some believers in an immortal soul allege.

In some ways, the human spirit is like computer software on a CD. Just as no software can function at all if it’s not inside a live computer, the human spirit does not function at all when not inside a live human being. But for God, that human spirit is God’s record of everything there was to know about the individual—every cell of that person’s body and every thought, memory, hope, dream and attitude of his/her mind—the entire person. It has no consciousness by itself outside the body; but after a person’s death, God stores it somewhere—we aren’t told

where. Then, when it is God's time to resurrect that individual, the complete record of the person will be there, ready to be put by God into a new body and resurrected to life. (More about the two resurrections later.)

“The soul goes to heaven or hell at death.”

Nearly all of professing Christianity claims a person's “immortal soul” goes to heaven or hell at death. In Roman Catholicism, there is a third possibility—an intermediate location called “purgatory.”

But what does the *Bible* teach? Let us look in detail at the Bible's true teachings on the “reward of the saved.” (After that, we'll see what the Bible tells us about the punishment of the unpentant wicked.)

According to your Bible, the *actual* reward of the true Christian is to be *resurrected*—when Jesus returns to the earth—from the previously described state of being totally dead. At that time, any true Christians who may still be alive at His return will simply be changed from physical and mortal to immortal spirit. On the other hand, the actual punishment of the unrepentant wicked will be total destruction—not perpetual suffering in any “ever-burning hell.” Neither the reward nor the punishment occurs right at death. The dead, as we've described earlier, “sleep” until they are resurrected—either to the reward or to the judgment (and possible punishment).

Paul—writing in I Thessalonians 4:13-17 to the brethren at Thessalonica to encourage them regarding dead loved ones—said, “But I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that you be not grieved, even as others, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in exactly the same way also, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those who have fallen asleep. Because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with

stars and the sun part of the “heavens”? If so, then were they not already created *before* the earth?

Verse 2: “And the earth was **without form and void**, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved upon the **waters**.” What do we have here? We have a planet entirely covered with water—“without form and void.” But did God create it that way? “For thus says the LORD, the creator of the heavens, He Himself is God, Who formed the earth and made it; He has established it. **He created it not in vain**, but formed it to be inhabited...” (Isa. 45:18). The Hebrew word translated “in vain” here is *tohu*, the same Hebrew word translated “without form” in Genesis 1:2.

Since we know the Bible does not contradict itself, what answer does the combination of Genesis 1:2 and Isaiah 45:18 give us? Consider the fact that the Hebrew word *hayah*, translated “was,” can also be correctly rendered “became.” In fact, *hayah* is correctly translated “became” in Genesis 2:7, where we read that the man God created *became* a living soul. In Genesis 19:26, Lot's wife *became* a pillar of salt after looking back to Sodom as she and Lot were escaping.

Since Isaiah tells us that God did *not* create the earth *to-hu*—without form and covered with water—does that not tell us then that *hayah* should be read also in Genesis 1:2 as “became”? Can humans inhabit a planet entirely covered with water? Not for long!

The way we find the earth in Genesis 1:2 is *NOT* the way God originally created it! How did it *become* that way—covered entirely with water? First, let's confirm the above conclusion—that God did not create it that way—by checking Job 38:4. God asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” In verse 7, He continues the thought: “...when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” When God first formed the earth, all the angelic beings were joyful about it. It was beautiful and habitable. It had not yet *become* “without form and void,” covered with water, and uninhabitable.

Again we ask: How did the earth *become* uninhabitable?

a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds for the meeting with the Lord in the air; and so shall we always be with the Lord.”

Note that the place we meet the Lord will be in the *air*. The Greek word here is *aero*, meaning the *breathable atmosphere*; it is not *ouranos*, the heaven of God’s throne. This resurrection of the faithful dead in Christ is the first of two prophesied resurrections, as we’re told in Revelation 20:4-5.

Continuing on the first resurrection, Paul tells us, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruit; then those who are Christ’s **at His coming**” (I Cor. 15:22-23). Then, in verses 51-53, he says, “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal **must put on** immortality.” Why must we *put on* immortality? Because we *do not now have it*!

What is this “last trumpet” to which Paul refers? In Revelation chapters 8-11, we read of seven trumpets, each sounded by an angel toward the end of the age, of which the “last trumpet”—the seventh—is the one we read of in Revelation 11:15. “Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet; and there were great voices in heaven saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign into the ages of eternity.’ ” It is at this point—the sounding of the “last trumpet”—that Jesus will return, and the dead in Christ will be raised to be spirit-born sons and daughters of God. This resurrection is the promised reward of the saved—*not* going to heaven at death. Jesus plainly said four times in the sixth chapter of John’s gospel alone that He will *raise* the faithful Christian “at the last day” (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54). That “last day” is the end of this present age.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Common Error of Atheists, Evolutionists, and Young Earth Creationists

Believe it or not, all three of the above groups make the same erroneous assertion about the Bible. They think the Bible says the following:

“The earth and the universe are only about six thousand years old.”

The fact is, the Bible *does not give an age for the earth* or for the “heavens” (the universe) at all. Those who make the error of assuming the Bible limits the earth’s age to only 6,000 years have failed to apply several *cardinal rules* of Bible study: 1) Do not try to establish any teaching based on just one passage (or even one whole chapter) of the Bible; 2) Allow the Bible—and *only* the Bible—to interpret *itself*; 3) Realize that, as the Word of God, the Bible *never* contradicts itself; and 4) Realize that truth (no matter what kind of truth it may be or what source it comes from) does not conflict with any other truth (whatever source that may come from). In short, truth *never* contradicts or conflicts with other truth. If there really is a conflict, then one of the two “truths” is simply *not* truth. On the other hand, both assertions could be true, and there may only *seem* to be a conflict. This could be because someone does *not correctly understand* one of the two statements. The Bible does NOT contradict or conflict with *true* science (or any other kind of “secular” knowledge) at any time, or in any manner.

We read in Genesis chapter 1, verse 1: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth [in that order].” Are not the

In the book of Acts, we read that Paul was being questioned about what he was preaching. Was he preaching that faithful saints go to heaven at death? In Acts 24:15, speaking before the governor, Felix, he said, "...having hope in God, which they themselves also acknowledge, that there will be a **resurrection** of the dead—both the just and the unjust." In verse 21 he went on to say, "...concerning the **resurrection** of the dead am I being judged by you this day." Then he asks Herod Agrippa, in Acts 26:8, "Why do you find it incredible that God would **raise the dead**?"

Meanwhile, we must look at the true teachings of the Bible regarding the punishment of the "damned" or incorrigible wicked—those who, having been resurrected and shown their sins of this life, refuse to repent and ask for God's forgiveness. They are thrown bodily into the *Gehenna* of the earlier verses we quoted, also called the "lake of fire" and the "second death" (Rev. 20:14). As Christ told the disciples in the passage quoted earlier (Matt. 10:28), the soul or life (including the body, brain and human spirit) of the unrepentant sinner will be burned up—completely *destroyed*—in the lake of fire. While it will certainly be a horrible death, it will not last for all eternity as "Christianity" would have us believe. This "second death" that the wicked suffer will probably last no more than a few minutes, until they have totally ceased to exist. The prophet Malachi tells us: " 'And you shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I am preparing,' says the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 4:3).²

Earlier we referred to the two resurrections of John 5:28-29: "Do not wonder at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: those who have practiced good to a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil to a resurrection of judgment." Now, it is true that no one has done *only* good in this life, since everyone has sinned (Rom. 3:23). But we also read that those who in this life have *repented* of their sins have had them erased—put as far from them "as the east is from the west" by God—as we're told

birth to a son, and **you shall call His name Jesus**; for He shall save His people from their sins' " (Matt. 1:18-21).

Mary herself received the same naming instructions: "And in the sixth month of her [Elizabeth's] pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the lineage of David, and the name of the virgin was Mary. And after coming to her, the angel said, 'Hail, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you; blessed are you among women.' But when she saw him, she was greatly perplexed at this message, and was considering what kind of salutation this might be. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found grace with God. And behold, you shall conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and **you shall call His name Jesus**' " (Luke 1:26-31).

Does the angel tell either Joseph or Mary to name their son "Yeshua"? Those who assume Joseph and Mary spoke Aramaic overlook the fact that Galilee was a *Gentile* province in which Jews were a minority. In fact, about half of all Jews in the *diaspora* (places away from their original land to which Jews had been scattered) spoke *Greek* as their primary language—including those Jews in Galilee, where the main language was Greek. In the Old Testament, Galilee is called "Galilee of the nations." The Hebrew here is *goy*, usually translated "Gentile." Galilee was a predominantly Gentile province, where the spoken language was Greek—*not* Hebrew or Aramaic. Even in Judea itself, it was not unusual to find Jews with Greek names, or Hellenized forms of Hebrew names, as we see often in the New Testament.

Those who insist that our savior must be called "Yeshua" are both doctrinally and historically in error.

together, it is clear that Christ was NOT in agreement with the Pharisees on doctrinal issues or on matters of daily custom or practice.

Note also that the Pharisees being in “Moses’ seat” was not based on any authority given to them by God. They had *sat themselves* down in this seat. The Greek interlinear by George Ricker Berry is clearer than the *King James Version*. It reads that the Pharisees “**have sat down**” on Moses’ seat (Matt. 23:1, Berry, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, p. 64).

Does Jesus say they were “put in Moses’ seat by God?” No. He says they have *sat themselves* down in Moses’ seat—*not* by any authority from God. They had *usurped* this position. The scribes and Pharisees had *zero* authority from God to do any doctrinal teaching whatsoever! The seat of Moses, however, was a seat of *civil* judicial authority; so if anyone ever had a *civil* case to be decided by this court, they were to abide by the decision rendered—so long as it was based solidly on the *written Scriptures* of Moses (the Pentateuch).

We should also note that the traditions of the Pharisees were based on a *mythical* “Oral Torah.” We are told in Exodus 24:4 that Moses “**wrote every word**” of the laws God gave him. That’s why it’s called the *Book* of the Law. There *never* was any “oral law”!

“Jesus’ actual name was Yeshua, because His parents spoke Hebrew or Aramaic.”

Note this passage: “And the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: Now His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph; but before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, was not willing to expose her publicly, was planning to divorce her secretly. But as he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife, because that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall give

in Psalms 103:12. These people will be resurrected to the reward of the saved, as described earlier, at the return of Christ. This is the *first* resurrection. “And I saw thrones and they that sat upon them.... [A]nd they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (But the rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were completed.) This is the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:4-5).

On the other hand, the *second* resurrection is described in more detail in Revelation 20:11. “Then I saw a great white throne and the one Who sat on it, from Whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of the things that were written in the books, according to their works.” The event John describes here is often referred to as the “white throne judgment.”

Appearing before Christ in this “judgment” does *not* automatically spell doom for those involved. The *King James Version* of John 5:29 *erroneously* translates it “those who have done evil to a resurrection of damnation.” The Greek word wrongly translated “damnation” here is *krisis*, which means “decision” or “judgment.” In a court of law, a person is not condemned until the evidence has been examined. Similarly, the then-resurrected person won’t be condemned until the evidence of his “works” in this life is examined.

Also, let’s remember that just as no one has done *only good*, no one has *only evil* in this life either. What Jesus meant by “those who have done evil” was those who never in this life *repented of their evil* and so never had their sins forgiven and put away by God. All who come up in the second resurrection—the “white throne judgment”—are in the category of those who had never (up until that future time) repented of their sins.

Before assuming anything about these people’s ultimate fate, let’s consider what we’re told through the prophet Ezekiel regarding the “dry bones” he saw in a vision. “And He [God] said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel;

behold they say, “Our bones are dried and our hope is lost; we ourselves are completely cut off.”

He continues: “Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, O, My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves and will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, O My people, and have brought you up out of your graves. And I shall put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. And you shall know that I the Lord have spoken it and have done it,” says the Lord’ ” (Ezek. 37:11-14).

While many Bible prophecies have in past history been fulfilled, this one—of a future resurrection of all dead Israelites to physical life—clearly has *not* yet been fulfilled (nor will it be for some time to come).

But wait. What have we just read here? God makes a promise to resurrect the *whole* house of Israel and put His Spirit into them; and the prophecy applies to *all* Israel—not just to those who “did good.” Is there a conflict here? Keep in mind that, as the inspired Word of God, the Bible *never* contradicts itself.

First, let us recognize that there is only one “white throne judgment,” and what John saw in his vision of Revelation 20 were “the dead, small and great.” There were no exceptions (except, of course, those who had been in the first resurrection a thousand years earlier). The people over whose bones Ezekiel was told to prophesy are *included* in this “rest of the dead” of Revelation 20:5. What are we told happens to those who stand before Christ’s throne on this occasion? “And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, **according to their works.**” These books will contain the records of each person’s works, or deeds, in *this* life.

How, then, if the resurrected “house of Israel” (of which Ezekiel prophesied) will be judged “according to their works,” can they possibly have God’s Spirit put in them, as He promises in Ezekiel 37:14? What must happen before *any* person can receive God’s Holy Spirit? In Acts 2:38, Peter says, “**Repent** and

surely wear away, both you and this people that are with you, for this thing is too burdensome for you. You are not able to perform it alone. Hearken now to my voice. I will give you counsel, and God will be with you. You can be for the people toward God that you may bring the **causes** to God. And you shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shall make them know the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do.

“ ‘And you shall choose out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness. And place them over the people to be leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties and leaders of tens. And **let them judge for the people** at all times. And it shall be, every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge. And make it easier for yourself, and they shall bear the burden with you’ ” (Ex. 18:13-22).

Let us note several key points here. What Jethro was counseling Moses against was *not* a “class” Moses was teaching in doctrine. Note the words “cause,” “judge” and “between one and another.” The people waiting to speak with Moses were bringing cases of *judgment* between themselves and someone else. Both parties in the dispute were likely there together. “Moses’ seat” was for the purpose of deciding cases of *dispute* between one person and another.

What Christ was saying to do had nothing to do with the teaching of doctrine, or with following the traditions of the Pharisees. (If He had meant that, it would contradict what He told the disciples in Matthew 16:6 and 12, and with what He said in Mark 7:9—condemning their preference for their own traditions over God’s laws. Contrary to what some would have us believe, Christ *never* contradicted Himself.) What Jesus was telling His followers to do in Matthew 23 was that *if* they ever had a dispute to bring to the judges in “Moses’ seat,” and the judge made a decision based on Moses’ teachings clearly outlined in *written Scripture*, they were to abide by that decision. But they clearly were *not* to follow the *traditions* and *practices* of the scribes and Pharisees. When we put all of the relevant scriptures on this subject

the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt. 16:12). Does Jesus’ labeling of the Pharisees’ teachings as “leaven” indicate His being “in agreement” with them—or does it show the exact *opposite*? One cannot note the repeated *confrontations* Christ had with the religious leaders of that day and think He was in *agreement* with them. Quite obviously, He was in *disagreement* with the Pharisees.

He spoke clearly against Judaic tradition (based on the mythical “Oral Torah”) when He said, “Full well do you **reject the commandment of God**, so that you may **observe your own tradition**” (Mark 7:9).

Some argue that He told His disciples in Matthew 23 to obey the leadership of the scribes and Pharisees. Let us read that passage carefully: “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees have sat down on Moses’ seat as judges; therefore, every judgment that they tell you to observe, observe and do. But do not do according to their works; for they say and do not’ ” (Matt. 23:1-3). Was Christ in fact telling everyone to follow the teachings and practices of the Pharisees? If that were true, then these instructions would *contradict* what He said in passages we’ve already quoted. Christ was no schizophrenic—saying a thing one time, then saying the opposite another time.

We need to ask: What was this “Moses’ seat” Christ spoke of? Did it have anything to do with the authority to teach doctrine? We find the origin of “Moses’ seat” beginning in Exodus 18:13: “And on the next day it came to pass that **Moses sat to judge** the people. And the people stood by Moses from the morning to the evening. And when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, ‘What is this thing which you do for the people? Why do you sit alone by yourself, and all the people stand by you from morning to evening?’

“And Moses said to his father-in-law, ‘Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a **matter**, they come to me. And **I judge between one and another**, and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.’ And Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘The thing that you do is not good. You will

be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” What must always precede any person’s receipt of the Holy Spirit? They must *repent* of their sins.

Putting together the prophecies of Revelation 20 and Ezekiel 37—and keeping in mind that the Bible does *not* contradict itself—we see that the dead who come before the “white throne” of Christ in the second resurrection are *judged* according to their deeds in *this first life*. Of course, *all* are told that they are worthy of death in the “lake of fire.” But they are also told the *good news* that the very one sitting on the “white throne” has *paid* that death penalty for them, and that the sacrifice Christ made on the cross *can* apply to them—if *they will only repent* of the sins of which they’ve been judged guilty. (Remember, Satan the devil will have been banished by this time and will be unable to inspire a perverse and unrepentant attitude in anyone.) Of course, no one will be “forced” to repent, so it is possible that a few may not repent. From what God inspired Ezekiel to write, it certainly would appear that those who refuse to repent will be very few indeed. Paul seems to confirm this when he says, “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11:26).

The message of the *entire Bible*—the Gospel or Good News—is this: In the long-term plan of God, He will extend the *opportunity* to repent and receive forgiveness to every person who has ever lived and died. God did NOT create the human race in order to destroy most people—much less to make them suffer in some “ever-burning hell” forever! The true God that the Bible presents is one of LOVE—not the vengeful and man-hating monster some accuse the Bible of portraying.

“**God is a Trinity.**”

Supposedly, the “Godhead” consists of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In this “trine Godhead,” the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are allegedly coequal persons who rule the universe, though fulfilling slightly different

roles. The role of the “person” they call the Holy Spirit is to inhabit the converted Christian and empower him or her to live a “Christian life.”

The trouble with this picture is that the Bible does NOT say that the Holy Spirit is any sort of “being” or “person.” Rather, it is the agency by which God the Father and Jesus Christ project themselves into obedient, converted Christians and make their abode with them.

Let’s see what the *Bible* teaches about the nature of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told the disciples in John 14:23: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our abode with him.**” Did Christ say a “person” or “being” called the Holy Spirit would come and make “his” abode with the Christian?

One reason so many erroneously believe the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is a being or person is that too many English translations wrongly assign a personal gender to the Holy Spirit (for example, the *KJV* erroneously refers to the Spirit using the pronoun “he”), when the original Greek *does not* assign it the masculine gender. According to a respected authority on Greek grammar, Daniel B. Wallace, the Spirit (Greek *pneuma*) is not referred to in any New Testament passage as having the masculine gender—with which most translators *erroneously* render it.¹ Is it possible these translators are just weak in their grasp of Greek grammar? Or are they so locked-in to the “trinity” idea that they will not let *clear evidence against it* persuade them otherwise?

In Matthew 1:20, we read that an angel told Joseph in a dream the reason his intended wife, Mary, had become pregnant: “[T]hat which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit.” If the Holy Spirit were actually a person or being, wouldn’t that mean that the real father of Jesus was that “person” of the God-head called “God the Holy Spirit”?

But God the Father is clearly Christ’s real father. The Holy Spirit was merely the power, the *agency*, by which the Father

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pp. 331-332

today that buy into this false idea are making the same error as His contemporaries made who called for His crucifixion.

“The ‘historic Jesus’ was a mere man—sent from God perhaps, but not the Son of God He claimed to be.”

To refute this claim, look at John 1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.** He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and not even one thing that was created came into being without Him” (John 1:1-3). The identity of the Word is clearly established in verse 14: “And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we ourselves beheld His glory as of the only begotten with the Father) full of grace and truth.”

We are told countless times in Scripture that Jesus Christ *was* in fact God in the flesh, including Paul’s declaration to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:16). Christ Himself declared to the Jews, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM. Then they picked up stones to throw at Him,” (John 8:58-59).

Why did they want to stone Him? Because they knew what “I AM” meant. In Exodus 3:14, God had answered Moses’ question concerning the name of the “God of their fathers”: “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” Knowing that I AM was a name for the Lord God of Israel, the Jews thought He was committing blasphemy by calling Himself by that name. Of course, Jesus never committed any sin (Heb. 4:15), including blasphemy; He was not blaspheming when He called Himself by a name of God. He WAS God in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

“Jesus was a Jewish Rabbi, a practitioner of Pharisaical Judaism, and His Christianity was an outgrowth of that Judaism.”

Let’s read in Matthew 16:6, Christ’s warning to His disciples: “Beware of the **leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” The disciples understood His meaning: “Then they understood that He did not say beware of the **leaven** of bread, but of the **doctrine** of

So then, what are we to make of the following question Jesus asked the Pharisees: “Saying, ‘What do you think concerning the Christ? Whose son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in spirit call him Lord, saying, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’ ”?’ Therefore, if David calls Him Lord, how is He his Son?” (Matt. 22:42-46).

What Christ was plainly saying was that *He Himself* was the “my Lord” David refers to in Psalm 110:1—and it was the Father who said the quoted words to Him, telling Him to sit at the Father’s right hand. We see this confirmed when Paul asks, “But unto which of the angels did He ever say, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’?” (Heb. 1:13). Peter also confirms that this passage of Psalms refers to Christ (Acts 2:34-35). While the Father was not revealed in detail in the Old Testament, the fact that God did indeed consist of two beings was hinted at many times—for those who were paying attention.

In the second Psalm, we read a passage later partially quoted by Paul in the book of Hebrews (Heb. 1:5) as referring to Christ: “I will declare the decree of the Lord. He has said to me, ‘You are My Son; this day have I begotten You. Ask of Me, and I shall give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ And now be wise, O kings, and be admonished, O judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way, for His wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him” (Psalm 2:7-12).

One more example hinting at two members of the Godhood is in the book of Proverbs: “Who has gone up to heaven and has come down? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in His garments? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and **what is His is Son’s name**, if you know?” (Prov. 30:4).

The idea that God is only one person is why the Jews of His day rejected Christ’s profession to be the Son of God. Those

begot Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary. This is in fact how Jesus *became* the Son of God the Father—fulfilling the prophecy of Psalms 2:7: “You are My Son, this day I have begotten You.”

Now, consider the fact that each of the New Testament epistles to a church written by Paul begins with a greeting from God the Father and Jesus Christ. *Not once* does he mention the Holy Spirit as sending any greeting. Why? Because it is not a “person” of the “Godhead.” It is not any kind of person or being at all!

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John conveys in writing much of what God revealed to him in vision about the heaven of God’s throne. John was taken *in vision* before the very throne of the Father. There he also saw Christ, pictured as a Lamb with multiple horns. In addition, John saw all manner of angelic beings. But what was *missing*? Any hint of a “third person” in heaven as God! This might partially explain why so much of mainstream “Christianity” either rejects, ignores, or de-emphasizes the book of Revelation: It does not substantiate their near-obligatory belief in a so-called Trinity. In fact, along with the other passages we’ve cited, Revelation would seem to totally disprove any idea of a “trinity”!

“Sunday is the Christian day of worship.”

Most of professing Christianity teaches that Sunday—the first day of the week—is the day to assemble for church services. For some, church attendance on Sunday is obligatory.

But does the *Bible* teach that Sunday is the day we are to assemble for worship? Which day did God say in the Ten Commandments is the day to rest—the first day of the week, or the *seventh* day? “Six days shall you labor and do all your work. But the **seventh day** is the Sabbath of the Lord your God” (Ex. 20:9-10).

Did Christ keep the seventh-day Sabbath as our example? Luke 4:31 tells us, “Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days.” What did He tell

the disciples in John 15:10: “If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love.”

Many churches claim Sunday is the “Lord’s Day.” But what is the day of which Jesus emphatically *said* He was Lord? Was it Sunday? Note carefully: “Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of **the Sabbath**” (Mark 2:28). Whom do you choose to believe—“churchanity” or Jesus Christ?

If we claim to be “in Christ”—faithful Christians—which day *should* we be observing and keeping holy? The same day He kept? “Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked” (1 John 2:6). A true Christian will follow Christ’s example and obey His teachings. He said to His disciples in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments.” (Notice, by the way, He did not say, “nine out of ten.”)

Did the Sabbath part of the Law of God get changed by any authority from God Himself? “For truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the Law until everything has been fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18). Christ promised that not even a punctuation mark—much less a whole commandment—would be altered from the basic law of God, the Ten Commandments. Are the heavens and earth still here? Then do *all ten* of God’s commands still apply?

Who, then, substituted Sunday for the Sabbath? Whole books have been written on the subject of how Sunday came to be accepted by most of professing Christianity as the day to observe.² Suffice it to say, it was *not* done on any biblically supported authority from God!

**“Jesus was crucified on Friday and
resurrected on Sunday morning.”**

Supposedly, Jesus was crucified on a Friday—the “Good Friday” of Christendom—and resurrected on a Sunday morning.

1:26). Who are the “Us”? Who was speaking to whom? Some have tried to posit that the Father was speaking to angels. But is man made in the image of angels—or in the image of *God*? Haven’t we already read that “all things came into being through Him [the Word], and not even one thing that was created came into being without Him” (John 1:3)? Both Jesus and the Father were the “Us” of Genesis 1:26. There is *one* God, comprised of *two* members—the Father and Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying to the Father, He expressed the *sense* in which He and the Father are *one*: “And I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as **We are one**” (John 17:11). How are the Father and Jesus “one”? The same way the disciples of Christ and His subsequent Church were to be—one body with many members. How is God “one”? One God comprised of two members now—with more to come later (Rom. 8:29).

Also, we should note that Christ asked the Father in this same prayer, “And now, Father, glorify Me with Your own self with **the glory that I had before the world existed**” (John 17:5). Isn’t this reinforced by John 1:1-14, which we’ve already quoted?

Let’s also remember that when Jesus was lamenting over Jerusalem, He said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who have been sent to you; how often would **I** have gathered your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you refused” (Luke 13:34). Did Christ say, “How often would *my Father* have gathered your children”? No. As the Lord God of ancient Israel, *He* had many times wanted to gather them to Himself in love, but they repeatedly refused.

Here’s another example showing *two* members of the Godhood: King David of Israel wrote, “The Lord said unto my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies as your footstool’ ” (Psalms 110:1). What earthly “lord” did David have over him after having subjugated all the surrounding nations? None.

² For Example: Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, and Abraham Herbert Lewis, *A Critical History of the Sabbath and Sunday in the Christian Church*

“spokesman” for the Father to mankind in ancient times was the one who *became* Jesus. As we’ve already read in John 1:3, “All things came into being through Him, and not even one thing that was created came into being without Him.” Christ carried out the work of the creation—under the authority of the Father; and He spoke to Israel for the Father, through Moses, David, and the Prophets; and He inspired all the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures.

As a further proof of this, the apostle Peter tells us: “... concerning which salvation the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you have diligently searched out and intently inquired, searching also what way and what manner of time **the Spirit of Christ which was in them** was indicating, testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and these glories that would follow...” (I Pet. 1:10-11). Could the “Spirit of Christ” possibly have been *in the prophets* if *He* did not yet exist (as some allege) and was not the Lord God of ancient Israel?

How many Gods do the Scriptures tell us there are? The believers in “one God” are correct—the Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 6:4 and many other places that there is one God. But if they interpret that to mean only one *person* is God—the Father, thereby excluding Jesus—then they try to make the Bible say something it does *not* in fact say. The Scriptures actually tell us that the Godhood (or God Family) consists of *two* persons—the Father *and* Jesus Christ.

However, this is NOT saying there are “two Gods.” Some may make the mistake of assuming such an idea. Let us ask a question: If it is said that a company is run by a partnership of two people, is that to say it is run by “two partnerships”? Of course not. The parent governing entity is not to be confused with its individual component members. By the same token, the governing institution, the Godhood (of which there is *one*), is not to be confused with the two *members* of that Godhood—the Father and Jesus Christ.

At the time of creation, we see this recorded: “And God said, ‘Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, after **Our** likeness...’ ” (Gen.

That supposed “resurrection Sunday” is celebrated as *Easter*. But what does the *Bible* teach about the timing of these events?

How long did Jesus say He would be “in the heart of the earth”? In Matthew 12:40, He said, “Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, **in like manner** the Son of man shall be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” How long a period comprises three days and three nights—how many hours are we talking about? How many hours did Jesus say a day lasts? John 11:9: “Are there not twelve hours in a day?” Twelve hours for a day leaves 12 for a night—correct? Does not the total hours for three days and three nights, then, add up to 72 hours?

Question: How do 72 hours fit in between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning? Short answer: *They don’t*. If you asked a gas station attendant for \$3.00 worth of gasoline, would you be satisfied with only \$1.50 worth, if he still charged you \$3.00? Christ promised He’d be dead three full 24-hour days. Mainstream Christianity would have us believe He shortchanged us!

The *truth*—according to the Bible—is that Jesus was *not* crucified on a Friday, and He was *not* resurrected on a Sunday! We must look only to the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, for the truth on this matter—not to the traditions and circuitous reasonings of deceptive theologians intended to justify what are in fact *pagan*, sun-worshipping practices.

But how do we know on what day of the week Jesus was actually crucified? The night He was arrested was before the day of the Jewish authorities, including the High Priest, were going to take *their* Passover. (Note that Christ and the disciples had already taken the *correct* Passover the evening before, as we read in Luke 22:8, 11, 13, 15 and John chapters 13-17.) John 18:28 tells us that after His midnight arrest the priests sent Him early in the morning to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, whose judgment hall they would not themselves enter. “Now then, they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the judgment hall, and it was early. But they did

not go into the judgment hall, so that they would not be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.” John 19:14-15 further clarifies that the day Jewish authorities condemned Christ to death was before *their* Passover would begin that evening. “(Now it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour.) And he [Pilate] said to the Jews, ‘Behold your king.’ But they cried aloud, ‘Away with Him! Crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’”

We’re told in John 19:31 that the “Sabbath” before which Christ was crucified was *not* the weekly Sabbath, but a “high day.” Thus, the crucifixion was NOT on a Friday! “The Jews therefore, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, because it was a preparation day (for that Sabbath was a **high day**), requested of Pilate that their legs might be broken and the bodies be taken away.”

We will see that there were *two* “preparation days” during the week Christ was crucified. In Mark 16:1 we read, “Now when the Sabbath [the “high day”] had passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought aromatic oils, so that they might come and anoint Him.” The Sabbath that had passed was the “high day” which John had cited as the day coming after the crucifixion. After buying the spices—on what had to be a regular business day—they “returned to the city and prepared the spices and then rested on the [weekly] Sabbath according to the commandment (Luke 23:56).”

Let’s read all this carefully. There was a “Sabbath,” called a *high day* in John 19:31, that followed Christ’s crucifixion; then there was a business day on which the women bought and prepared the spices for Christ’s body; then there was *another* Sabbath, on which they rested. Clearly, the first of the two Sabbaths—the one following Christ’s crucifixion—could not have been the weekly Sabbath. That means His crucifixion could *not* have been on a Friday; it had to have been on a Wednesday. The high day that followed was a Thursday, followed by the business day on which the women purchased the spices, which would have

We’re later told, “And Moses went up and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And **they saw the God of Israel**. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the heavens in clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hands. Also **they saw God** and ate and drank” (Ex. 24:9-11). Who was this “God” they saw, if Christ was speaking correctly when He said no one had seen God the Father, at any time?

Centuries later, the prophet Isaiah had a terrifying experience in the Temple one day. He had heard the voice of God more than once. But this time he *saw* God and some angels. “In the year that Uzziah died, **I then saw the Lord** sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (Isa. 6:1). Isaiah’s initial response was, “Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for **my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts**’ ” (Isa. 6:5).

Was Christ in error when He said no man had seen God the Father? If not, then whom did Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah see? Whose voice did the children of Israel hear giving the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai? Whom did the 70 elders of Israel see part way up Mt. Sinai? Whom did Isaiah see in the Temple? (Keep in mind once again: the Scriptures do not lie or contradict each other.)

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, answers our question in no uncertain terms as to who the God of Israel was. Speaking of the Israelites, he says, “And they all drank of the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them. And **that Rock was Christ**” (I Cor. 10:4). God the Father was not the Lord God of ancient Israel. It was the one who later *became* Jesus Christ, manifested as a fleshly human being, as Paul wrote: “And undeniably, great is the mystery of Godliness: **God was manifested in the flesh...**” (I Tim. 3:16).

If Christ was the Lord God of ancient Israel, does that mean the Father was not in any way involved? No. Christ clearly said He always deferred to the Father’s authority. But the

been a Friday—since after that, as we read, they “rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.” The second of the two Sabbaths would, of course, be the weekly Sabbath—Saturday.

Now let us do some calculation: If the day of the crucifixion was in fact a Wednesday, and Christ’s body was put into the tomb just before sunset, could He have been in the tomb three full 24-hour days—72 hours total? *Yes*. And *when* would that place His resurrection? When is 72 hours after Wednesday afternoon just before sunset? *Saturday* afternoon just before sunset! Thus, Christ’s resurrection was NOT on a Sunday!

If we believe these clear scriptures, we see that Christ was not crucified on a Friday, nor was He resurrected on a Sunday. But didn’t the women come on Sunday morning and find that Christ had just risen? Let’s read Mark 16:2-3 carefully; if we do, we’ll see that by Sunday morning “the stone had already been removed and the tomb was empty.” Christ had *already* been resurrected. Based on our calculations above, we know just when—Saturday afternoon, just before sunset—*not* on Sunday. This fact also nullifies the excuse some use for keeping Sunday—the *false* idea of Christ having been resurrected on a Sunday.

“Those not saved in this life will burn forever in hell.”

Mainstream Christianity teaches the idea that *now*—in this life—is the one and only time of salvation. Therefore, the assumed duty of all Christians is to “save as many souls as possible.” So zealous believers stand on street corners handing out pamphlets, or evangelize door-to-door, or do whatever else they think will get people saved. As a result of this idea, some have even felt “called” to go into the ministry itself.

But what does the *Bible* teach on this subject?

Let us start by asking a few questions: Is God trying to save all of mankind *now*—in this life? If so, what kind of progress is He making? Not so good, right? But does God ever fail at anything He sets out to do? Or does He possibly have a long-term *plan* for all of mankind?

CHAPTER THREE

Clear Scriptures Positively Identifying The Lord God of Ancient Israel

***“There is only one who is God—the Father.
Jesus is not God, and He did not exist before
His Human Birth.”***

There are a number of false teachings about Jesus Christ that have been disproved by Scripture. Christ said, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:18). “And the Father Himself Who sent Me has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice nor seen His form at any time” (John 5:37). “No one has seen the Father except He Who is from God; He has seen the Father” (John 6:46). Jesus clearly declares that no person in Old Testament times ever saw or heard the voice of the Father. Thus, the Father could NOT have been the “Lord God” of ancient Israel. But if He wasn’t, then who was?

We read in Genesis 18:2-21 that Abraham *saw* and talked to God. He even reasoned with Him: “And the men [angels] turned their faces away from there and went toward Sodom. But Abraham still stood before the Lord” (Gen. 18:22). Who was this “Lord” before whom Abraham stood? If we believe Christ’s words quoted above, it could not possibly have been the Father. Who does that leave? In Exodus 20, we’re told that God spoke the Ten Commandments in the ears of all Israel: “**And God spoke all these words**, saying, ‘I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage’” (Ex. 20:1-2). God then goes on to audibly speak the Commandments in the ears of Israel. It was *not* Moses on that occasion, but God Himself speaking.

Earlier, when we discussed the two resurrections, we got a glimpse of that plan. We can rest assured that no one “not saved” in this life is necessarily doomed forever. God is far *more merciful* than too many preachers give Him credit for! Regarding the two future resurrections of the dead, those not in the first resurrection *will* be in the second—no exceptions. (We should note that the present age in which we’re now living is *after* the first coming of Christ to the earth, but *before* His second coming.)

As proof God is not calling all people to salvation in this life, we should note that when the disciples asked Christ why He spoke so much in parables to the crowds, He told them in Matthew 13:11, “Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them **it has not been given.**” In verse 13 He went on to say, “For this reason I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, ‘In hearing you shall hear and in no way understand; and in seeing you shall see and in no way perceive; for the heart of this people has grown fat, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; **lest** they should see with their eyes, and should hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and **should be converted**, and I should heal them.’ ”

Yes—we have read this passage correctly! It is *not* God’s will for the majority of people to be converted *in this first life* and be spiritually healed through conversion! Only the *few* true disciples are being called in this life to conversion. The rest of the people to whom Christ was speaking were *not* being called at that time. The time for their calling is yet in the distant future. We need to let those facts sink in. But does that mean all those not called now are permanently lost? What about the rest of the world? What about those in far-off countries who have never even so much as heard the name of Jesus Christ—the only name under heaven “by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)? Can anyone possibly believe that such people have “had a chance” for salvation?

Once we realize that Jesus *was* in fact the Creator God of the Old Testament—“God manifested in the flesh,” as Paul tells us in I Timothy 3:16—we can drop the foolish and misleading idea that Jesus is somehow to be contrasted with the God of ancient Israel. Christ **WAS** the Creator God of ancient Israel! He did not come to bring a “grace” that would free people from the “curse” of the Law. The Law of God is not in fact any kind of “curse” at all. God gave the Law to Israel because He *loved* them.

In Matthew 22:35-40, we read, “And one of them, a doctor of the law, questioned Him, tempting Him, and saying, ‘Master, which commandment is the great commandment in the law?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second one is like it: ‘You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Having been the one who gave all the Law in the first place, Christ could say with absolute authority that He gave mankind His laws out of LOVE—not (as so many law-haters insist) out of some kind of malice toward mankind. All the commandments derive from God’s *love*.

Yes, Christ walked the earth as a human being who usually was kind and gentle; but He was not a nicey-nice pushover who could be bested by self-seeking Pharisees, scribes, or other adversaries. Also, as a man who had done much manual labor, He probably had callouses on His hands and could perform any needed physical task. The disciples, as working men themselves, would undoubtedly be more likely to look up to and respect Him because He was a “man’s man” in the best sense.

Can you picture a bunch of rowdy fishermen following anyone who looked like those fanciful pictures? We’ll discuss more about Jesus’ the true identity and nature in a later chapter.

“Jesus had a gentle look about Him with nicely groomed shoulder-length hair.”

The image of a long-haired, effeminate “Jesus” as passed off by “Christian” artists is still widely popular in today’s “Christianity.” Too many professing Christians have been duped into accepting this namby-pamby “gentle Jesus,” whom they contrast with a supposed harsh, vengeful God of the Old Testament who strapped Israel with the “curse of the law” at Mount Sinai.

Moreover, this *false Jesus* supposedly did away with His Father’s awful law and instead instituted love and “grace”—which in practice means they mostly may do whatever they want.

But what does the *Bible* tell us about Jesus? First of all, let us acknowledge that *no one* knows for certain what Jesus looked like. Let us also note, as we’re told in I John 4:8, that “God is love.” Certainly, Jesus was not the mean, dangerous, “toxically macho” type; but neither was He the effeminate guy with shoulder-length hair you see in most pictures. Paul pointedly asks us: “Does not even nature itself teach you that **if a man has long hair, it is a shame to him?**” (I Cor. 11:14). Would Paul—after having been knocked down on the road to Damascus by Christ in order to bring him to repentance—openly criticize how Jesus had looked when He walked the earth in the flesh? While we know based on prophecy (Isa. 50:6) that Jesus probably did have a beard, it is also clear that He did *not* have long hair—nor was He in any way effeminate.

John 1:1-3 tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him; and not even one thing that was created came into being without Him.” And lest we fail to recognize the fact that this “Word” was actually the One who became Jesus Christ, we’re told in verse 14, “And the Word **became flesh** and tabernacled [lived temporarily] among us (and we ourselves beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.”

What about those closer to home who may have at some time or another gone to a few church services, but never understood or believed what they heard? Paul tells us, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because **they are spiritually discerned**” (I Cor. 2:14). Is God unfair to the “natural man”? Will He consign to “hell” all those to whom He Himself did not give the ability to understand His Word? There are professing Christian preachers who would have us believe such a horrible idea—giving God no credit for His grace and mercy.

Jesus told the disciples in John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.” Clearly, the Father is drawing *only a small minority* of people to Christ in this era. The rest, however, are *not* permanently lost. That is what the second resurrection to the “white throne judgment” is for—so that those who *never* in this life had any chance for salvation may receive their *one and only chance* for salvation. As we’ve already discussed in the section on the resurrections, *no one* will be doomed to “burn in hell” forever.

What is God’s ultimate plan, purpose, and hope for all people? Why did He create the human race in the first place? The short answer is, God created the human race in order to add to the “God family” as many Spirit-born sons and daughters as will *choose* to obey Him. God’s intended destiny for *each* human being He created is that they become a Spirit-born son or daughter of His!

We humans start out physical—subject to death—with a human nature that does not naturally want to obey God (Rom. 8:7). As God reveals His plan and purpose to us and brings us to repentance of our sins and conversion, we join His true disciples as converted Christians, being baptized, receiving the Holy Spirit, and becoming the begotten sons and daughters of God. Thus we start on our way to the kingdom of God—growing in grace and spiritual knowledge (II Pet. 3:18), and developing the very nature

and character of Christ, our spiritual elder brother (Eph. 4:11-13).

In this life, those whom God brings to conversion, if they remain faithfully obedient till death, will be resurrected at the return of Christ and become co-rulers with Him on the earth for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4). During that thousand years (often called “the millennium”), people will come to conversion, grow spiritually, and develop the nature of Christ. They will become a kind of “second wave” of new entrants into the kingdom of God. After the millennium is over, the “white throne judgment” takes place. Those who—when they are then given their one and only chance to repent of the sins they committed in this first life—do repent, have their sins forgiven, and live a life of spiritual growth, will also enter the kingdom of God. These could be called the “third wave” of newly born sons and daughters of God. For the first of the three waves, the process of spiritual growth is no doubt the most difficult; for the second wave (those converted during the millennium) it is somewhat easier, since they won’t have to overcome the world and Satan; for the third wave it may be even easier, since they will have the experience of the two previous groups to draw upon.

This summary completes what we know from the Bible of the overall plan of God. (In later sections, we will discuss in more detail other aspects or stages of His plan.) When God’s plan is fulfilled, as we read in Revelation 21 and 22, God the Father will bring His heavenly throne down *to the earth* and live among His Spirit-born sons and daughters on the earth forever. We’re not given much detail of what follows after that; but we’re assured that it will be indeed wonderful.

The requirements for salvation and attainment of God’s kingdom are the same for everyone in each of the three “waves” of prospective entrants into the kingdom: They must repent of sin—the transgression of God’s law (I John 3:4)—be forgiven by God, receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit, and grow spiritually in the nature and character of Jesus Christ, ultimately to be born of the Spirit into the kingdom (the family) of God.

clouds for the meeting with the Lord **in the air**; and so shall we always be with the Lord” (I Thess. 4:14-17).

Note the words emphasized in bold type. How “secret” is a coming that is accompanied by a “shout of command,” the “voice of an archangel” and the “trumpet of God”? Note also that we are to meet the Lord in *the air*—not in heaven. The Greek word Paul uses here is *aero*, which means the breathable atmosphere.

Other passages we’ve previously quoted—such as I Corinthians 15:50-53—show that Paul understood the resurrection of the faithful “dead in Christ” as taking place at Jesus’ *one and only* second coming, which will be anything but “secret.” And Jesus will not be spiriting them off to heaven, since—as we’ve already shown—“going to heaven” is *not* the promised reward of the saved. After His return to the earth, where will Christ be? Will He not be here on earth? Then if He is on earth, and we will “always be with the Lord,” where will *we* be? The obvious answer: “also on the earth”!

Concerning the saints, John writes that God will “make us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign **on the earth**” (Rev. 5:10). In chapter 20 we see the same thing: “And I saw thrones; and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them; and I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and those who did not worship the beast or his image, and did not receive the mark in their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and **reigned [on earth] with Christ** a thousand years” (verse 4).

Daniel gives us the same perspective: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom **under [not in] the whole heaven** shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, Whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. And all kingdoms shall serve and obey Him” (Dan. 7:27).

Conclusion: After Christ comes *to the earth* and resurrects the saints to be “with the Lord,” where will that be? It will be on the earth—*not* in heaven.

of the “Four Gospels” will show that nearly everything Jesus said or did was related to that future kingdom: what it is, what it will be like, where it will be, who will be there, and what we must do to attain it. The culmination, of course, was His death and resurrection—which made possible man’s attainment of that kingdom.

“The faithful will be secretly raptured away to heaven.”

The idea of a secret “pre-tribulation rapture” of faithful Christians to heaven is popular in today’s mainstream Christianity. “Rapture” books and movies—like the *Left Behind* series—have both entertained and frightened churchgoers.

But is the “secret rapture” idea upheld by Scripture?

Those who assert such an idea seldom even try to prove it using the Bible. But some do point to Paul’s epistle to the Thessalonians, where he writes, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds for the meeting with the Lord in the air; and so shall we always be with the Lord” (I Thess. 4:17). They interpret these words to mean that *before* the prophesied “great tribulation” and *before* Christ actually returns to rule the earth, He first catches the faithful up to heaven in a “secret rapture”—to keep them from suffering in the “great tribulation.” Then, after the tribulation, He returns (in a kind of *second* coming) to actually rule the earth for a thousand years.

Let’s carefully examine what Paul was actually saying to the Thessalonians in this passage. To get the context, we’ll begin in verse 14: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in exactly the same way also, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those who have fallen asleep. Because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a **shout** of command, with the **voice of an archangel** and with the **trumpet** of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the

Let us keep in mind what Paul tells us in Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” Notice that Paul does *not* say the wages of sin is to “burn in hell” forever. However, the death that is the wages of sin is not the first death, either. Hebrews 9:27 tells us, “[It] is appointed to men once to die, but after this [though not immediately], the judgment.” The wages of sin (if not repented of) is the “second death” we’re told of in Revelation 20:12-14. We’ve already seen, when we discussed the “white throne judgment” earlier, that *all* people who have ever lived will have *one* opportunity to repent of their sins. Only those few who refuse to repent and accept the death of Christ as payment for their sins will be destroyed in the lake of fire.

But why must the wages of unrepented-of sin be the second death—from which there will be no resurrection? Because God’s purpose in creating the human race is to develop us ultimately into members of His holy, divine family as Spirit-born sons and daughters—brothers and sisters of Christ. We know that God the Father and Jesus Christ are—and will be forever—without sin of any kind. To be like Christ as His Spirit-born brothers and sisters, we must also *become* without sin (Matt. 5:48). No one can live eternally in the God family with the stain of sin. The blood of Christ cleanses the repentant sinner of that stain, because He—as God in the flesh—paid that death penalty for *all* who will repent of sin and accept Him as their Savior and then go on to practice obedience to Him.

In a later chapter, we will discuss Jesus in more detail. We will see what Scripture tells us of His identity, His nature, and His mission on earth—and who He was before His human birth. In so doing, we will dispel many of the myths about Christ—both those promulgated by professing Christianity and those promulgated by those who reject Christ as Savior.

CHAPTER TWO

Some Errors in Evangelical Protestant Teachings

“Jesus ‘did away’ with the Law of God.”

Supposedly, it is not necessary for Christians to keep the commandments of God that were given to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. The law, including the Sabbath, is “for the Jews only.”

But what does the *Bible* teach about God’s Law? Did Jesus abolish the Law? It would seem that any honest person who has read the “sermon on the mount” should know otherwise. **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law** or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the Law until everything has been fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17, 18). Are heaven and earth still here? Then is the Law of God still here?

What was the *main message* brought by Jesus, John the Baptist, and the apostle Peter? In Mark 1:15, we read that Christ said, “repent and believe in the gospel.” In Matthew 3:1-2, we read, “Now in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” Acts 2:38 tells us that Peter, on the day of Pentecost, told the crowd near the Temple, “Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins....” Of *what* are believers told to repent? Of *sin*. And what is the Bible definition of sin? “Sin is the transgression of the Law” (1 John 3:4, *KJV*). If Christ, John the Baptist, and Peter all taught the necessity to repent of breaking God’s Law, then how can that possibly mean the Law is “done away”?

Some may say, “But I notice you didn’t quote the apostle

What does the *Bible* teach about the “gospel”?

What was Christ doing throughout His ministry? “And Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and **preaching the gospel of the kingdom...**” (Matt. 4:23). In Mark 1:14, we read, “Now after the imprisonment of John, Jesus came in to Galilee, **proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God**, and saying, ‘The time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near at hand; repent and believe the gospel.’” Did Jesus say, “Believe the story about me”? Or was He urging those to whom He spoke to believe *His message*? And what was the subject of His message? Was it not the coming Kingdom of God?

The fact is, in the largest sense, the true gospel is the message of the *entire Bible*. Jesus, as He says in Revelation 1:8, is the “Alpha and the Omega”—the beginning and the ending. The entire Bible, from beginning to end, is about Jesus Christ. He was the God who created the heavens and the earth in the beginning: “...and not even one thing that was created came into being without Him” (John 1:3). Paul tells the Ephesians that God “created all things *by* Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:9). It was Christ who put Adam and Eve in the Garden; who told Noah to build the ark, then brought the worldwide flood; who called Abraham and the Patriarchs; who led the Israelites out of Egypt by Moses (1 Cor. 10:4); who was the “Lord God” of ancient Israel—the “Rock” David repeatedly called God in the Psalms; and the Rock (meaning Himself, not Peter) upon which He said He would build His Church (Matt. 16:18).

The true gospel—with all its subplots, teachings, and prophecies—is the *message* of the *entire Bible*! The account of Jesus’ life in the flesh and subsequent sacrificial death—as important as those are—is only a *part* of the whole gospel message from God.

But let us focus on the *message* Christ preached while on earth as “God in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). What are we told His message was about? Was it His own life story? “Now after the imprisonment of John, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the **gospel of the kingdom of God**” (Mark 1:14). A thorough reading

be “the firstborn [spiritually] among **many brethren**.”

Romans 1:20 tells us that what happens in the physical realm can help us understand much of what is spiritual. In physical human life, the first step in procreation is the *begetting* of a new child by the *father* through sexual intercourse with the future mother; then—only after a nine-month gestation period of growth in the womb of the mother—the baby is finally born. Birth is *not* the first step in the process, then, is it? What is it that the father does to begin the process? Does he not *first beget* the child?

In the same way, the first step in spiritual procreation by God is that, after repentance and baptism, God the Father *begets* the convert with His Holy Spirit. Then, after a lifetime of spiritual growth, the Christian who dies “in the faith” is ready to be *spiritually born*—at the resurrection of the “dead in Christ” that we described above (see I Cor. 15:50-53 and I Thess. 4:13-17).

Clearly, the time of conversion to Christianity is *not* the time a person is spiritually “born again,” any more than a physical baby is instantly born when its father and mother have intercourse! What is also clear is that the role of the father is in the child’s *begetting*—*not* the *birth* of it. So also in the spiritual realm: God the Father spiritually *begets* the son or daughter, beginning a *lifetime process* of spiritual “gestation” or growth in the “womb” of the Church. We will have more to say about spiritual growth later. Suffice it to say for now that “conversion” is only the *beginning*, not the end, of the “process of salvation.”

“The gospel is the story about Jesus.”

Mainstream Protestant teachings refer to the “gospel” as if it were only the “good news” *about* Jesus—His life and teachings, and the fact of His crucifixion and resurrection—which made Him the Savior of mankind. While all of this is certainly *part* of the gospel, it overlooks the most important part of the gospel: the *message* Christ Himself brought—that the kingdom of God is coming, and what any true believer must *do* to attain that kingdom.

Paul. Didn’t Paul say the Law is done away?” No, he said no such thing! Writing to *Gentiles* in Rome, Paul tells them, “[H]earers of the law are not just before God, but the **doers of the law** shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13). Some allege that Paul taught faith instead of law. But what did Paul say? “Are we, then, abolishing law through faith? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** Rather, we are **establishing law**” (Rom. 3:31).

Didn’t Jesus die on the cross because of mankind’s sin—because of our breaking of the Law? Doesn’t Paul also say, “... where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15); and “... sin is not imputed when law does not exist” (Rom. 5:13)? Can we use a little logic here? If Christ did away with the Law, then it no longer exists; we are not guilty of sin; and therefore we do not need a savior! By that reasoning, only those who lived and broke the Law before Christ “did away” with it were ever guilty of sin and under the death penalty! Needless to say, the mistaken teaching that Christ abolished the Law of God would *contradict* everything else the Bible teaches! Some would have us believe Paul taught such a thing; but that idea is based on either poor translations or the gross misinterpretation of some of Paul’s writings.

Back to the teachings of Christ: Do professing Christian preachers claim to “love Jesus?” What did He tell the disciples they would do if they truly loved Him? “If you love Me, **keep the commandments**—namely, My commandments” (John 14:15). Does that sound like He did away with them—or the precise opposite?

Believers are often told, “The commandments are impossible for us to keep, given the weakness of human nature.” Granted, no one by himself keeps the commandments perfectly even in the letter, much less in the spirit. That is why God gives His Holy Spirit to the truly converted Christian. By the power of the Spirit of God, we *can* grow to become spiritually more like our Savior, keeping God’s laws better each day, and asking God to forgive us when we fall short—as Christ taught us to do: “...and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors...” (Matt. 6:12).

“No works are required for salvation.”

Supposedly, if you’re trying to obey the Law, you’re trying to “earn your salvation.” (This teaching, of course, follows from the above idea we just disproved.)

Again, what does the *Bible* teach about works?

Those who preach a “no-works” salvation love to quote Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this especially is not of your own selves; it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast.” However, they generally fail to quote the very next verse, which says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto the good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them.**”

Is there a conflict here? Or are these verses telling us that while “works” of obedience do *not* save us (only the grace of God and His forgiveness of our sins, made possible by Christ’s shed blood, can do that), we were created for the very *purpose* of learning to become like God by following Christ’s example of obeying the commands of God—*doing* the righteous “works” which God created us to do!

Paul writes to the Colossians, “For this cause we also, from the day that we heard of it [their faith and love], do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every **good work** and growing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9-10).

The apostle John, in his vision from which he wrote the book of Revelation, heard the voice of Christ promise this: “And to the one who overcomes, and **keeps My works** to the end, I will give authority over the nations” (Rev. 2:26).

We’ve already read I John 2:6: “Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself to walk even as He Himself walked.” How did Christ walk? In John 15:10 He said, “If you **keep My commandments**, you shall live in My love; just as I

have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love.” None of this has anything whatsoever to do with “earning” anything!

“The converted Christian has been born again.”

According to mainstream Christianity, when Christ told Nicodemus in John 3:3 that in order to enter the Kingdom of God he must be “born again,” He meant Nicodemus must “get saved” and be baptized.

But what does the *Bible* teach about being “born again”?

Note that when Nicodemus questioned what Christ meant, he was told, “Truly, truly I say to you, unless anyone has been born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which has been **born of the flesh is flesh**; and that which has been **born of the Spirit is spirit**. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘It is necessary for you to be born again.’ The wind blows where it wills, but you do not know the place from where it comes and the place to which it goes; so also is everyone who has been born of the Spirit” (John 3:5-8).

Does the *water* Christ refers to mean the water of baptism? Or couldn’t it mean the water of physical birth—the first literal birth every person experiences? Do any converted Christians, after being baptized, fit the description Christ gave of one who has been spiritually reborn? Are they *invisible* like the wind—or aren’t they still very *visible* and very much material flesh? *Was* Jesus using “born again” to mean the state of a converted Christian? Clearly not!

Who (so far) is the only one that has been *spiritually* born again? Who is called the “**Firstborn** from the dead” in Revelation 1:5? When will the converted Christian be truly *born* again spiritually? At the return of Christ, when they will be spiritually “born” from the dead. We read in Colossians 1:18, “And He is the Head of the body, the church; Who is the beginning, the **firstborn from among the dead**...” The word “first” tells us that more are to come. Sure enough, we read in Romans 8:29 that Christ is to