

Foundations

Defending the Faith

...that you may know that you have eternal life

1 John 5:13

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May this book be a blessing to all so that they might be a blessing as well.

Preface

At some point, we all ask the question, “How did everything in the world get here, including me?” Once we start asking, we tend to keep asking until we find a satisfying answer, and although we may not realize it, we cling tightly to that answer until someone or something comes along to challenge it.

Searching for the answer to that question reveals there are only two possible solutions. Something – or someone – has always existed as the ultimate cause of everything. This supreme being or thing is not itself caused so it must be the “ultimate cause” of all things. Philosophers throughout the history of the world have sought the answer to the question of the ultimate cause, realizing there are only two possible answers: Matter or God.

The personal determination of each possible ultimate cause of all things is an issue of faith because no human existed when everything began. The original creation was not observed, only its effects. Faith decisions must be tested by facts and sound reasoning. The merit of any faith is found in the object, not in the strength of the will to believe. If the facts or analysis is not valid, neither will be the faith.

Have the material things that comprise the universe, known as “Matter,” always existed? Or, does it make more sense that a conscious being who can make things, commonly known as “God,” has always existed? Whether you believe the answer is “God” or “Matter” is a personal decision of faith. Whether it is a good decision or not, requires an honest look at the evidence and reasonable analysis of the facts. Your personal decision concerning the ultimate cause of all things has consequences that guide your thoughts and evaluations of life. This faith-based starting point is of primary importance to understanding the world and yet, as humans, it is easy to become so comfortable with our chosen starting point that we do not honestly analyze the decision.

The overall picture of how people view their existence, consciously or not, has been studied in its various parts by many people, and its impact is profound. Every society in the world experiences problems that stem from people not realizing or accepting some simple truths about the ultimate cause of all things. The results are increasing tension and chaos in the souls of humanity, on a global scale. Some people have never taken the time to think through these basic questions of life and some do not know where to start or why these questions are important. Many choose to simply survive each day while others have been deceived into rejecting a divine being or following a counterfeit.

Every world religion except atheism believes there is something beyond this present life, realizing they face an eternity that will not end after their physical death. They also realize that they have failed in some way in their thoughts, speech, and actions. These two issues combine to form a great problem. All humans are failures (sinners)

facing eternity. What can be done to solve the problem? How then can a person be saved forever from their problems?

There are only two possible solutions. People must either find a way to save themselves or find a savior from the problems of sin and death. All the world religions offer ways for people to save themselves and find eternal peace. Some form of personal works is always included in their thinking as the means of salvation. Only Christianity claims that people cannot save themselves by works, but instead need a Savior. In order to offer a reliable means of salvation, this Savior must be perfect and must have conquered sin and death. Jesus is the only Being able to legitimately offer eternal deliverance into the realm of eternal peace where there is no more pain nor suffering for the old things have passed away. He lived a perfect life, and rose from the dead. Therefore, saving faith places Jesus the Messiah as the object (John 3:16-18).¹

The purpose of this book is to provide evidence so the Believer in Jesus Christ may be able to defend Christian viewpoints from the world's constant attack (1 Pet 3:15).² It will present evidence that answers the questions, "Why the Christian God?" "Why the Bible?" "Are there assurances of eternal salvation?" and "How then shall we live?"

Current research shows that Christians are increasingly unfamiliar with the basic elements of their faith. Many cannot communicate what they believe or defend why they believe certain things to be true. It is also clear that the modern churchgoer does not know what is important and cannot share these truths with others. Because of a lack of familiarity with the basic elements of the Christian faith, even Believers can be easily misled by views that are in opposition to God's Word.

Both the world and the Christian begin with the same issues and face them each day. Often Christians, especially new Christians, have not been spiritually educated. The result is that they think like the unsaved. This discernment between right and wrong is a difference between a secular (of the world) or a spiritual (of the Holy Spirit) way of thinking. Believers can think like unbelievers. Training is required to identify secular thinking (Heb 5:14).³

Too many who call themselves Christians have been lured into thinking like the world and have departed from the faith. It is our prayer that this book will keep some from turning away from the Lord and also turn those back who have departed.

After the initial evidence is presented, concerning the Creator and His revelation to humanity, additional evidence will be presented concerning how to live a life that is pleasing to Him. This book will seek to clarify some areas of the Christian faith that have been a source of tension throughout the centuries. By the grace of God may it help ease the tension and edify the Body of Christ.

This book is not simply designed to identify the confusion in the world but present evidence why Christians traditionally believe in one God, whose name is Elohim, and why the Bible, in the original languages, should be considered totally and completely inspired by Him and thus perfect in the original manuscripts. We will explore the evidence for the existence of God and His revelation of Himself, not only through nature, but also through His written Word. Confusion exists when truth cannot be identified, but when truth is identified and thinking is clarified, peace can be the result.

What you will find in the following chapters of this book, *Foundations: Defending the Faith*, is a solid foundation that equips Believers to defend the faith that was delivered to the saints (Jude 3).⁴ This faith provides the assurance of our eternal salvation.

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

¹ **John 3:16-18** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

² **1 Pet 3:15** But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

³ **Heb 5:14** But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

⁴ **Jude 3** Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Chapter 1

Questions of Life

Questions of Life

A. Who or What is the Ultimate Cause of All Things?

Chapter one will introduce issues that are of primary importance to all of humanity and especially to those who call themselves Christians and desire to defend the faith. The initial sections contain questions that every human being should ask and seek to reasonably answer. These sections include the consequences when those questions are unreasonably answered. Basic issues of the Christian life need to be consistently reviewed to keep from being deceived and departing from the faith (Heb 2:1). The last sections outline the results of drawing reasonable conclusions from the first sections and the problems generated from unreasonable conclusions. Even Believers from time to time face crises in their faith and need a guide to correctly return to a path that is pleasing to God (2 Cor 5:9).

As Christians, spiritual decisions are required on a moment-by-moment basis. Will we make decisions from a reasonable spiritual viewpoint or from a secular human viewpoint? The best solution for any problem is the one that considers the most evidence and explains it with the simplest answer. A reasonable spiritual viewpoint will do just that.

Each of the following chapters will provide further evidence for the conclusions reached in this chapter. For example, Chapter 4 presents evidence that the Bible is accurate and worthy of consideration while seeking the truth. Once the truthfulness and accuracy of the Bible is established, it can be used to prove other principles.

It is clear there is a great conflict of viewpoints in this world that seek the hearts of men, so viewpoints and decisions about them are important. The result for the Believer, either consciously or unconsciously, is to consistently ask many of the same questions that an unbeliever does. When the source of truth becomes unclear for the Believer, which will happen if they ignore the written Word of God, it is easy to be led astray and accept false worldviews (a personal belief about how the world works) without thinking about where these views logically lead one's thinking (2 Cor 11:3).

This chapter will begin to analyze reasonable solutions to the key issues of life. The solutions will then be expanded to identify how to live the Christian life. There is a chart at the end of this chapter that will help explain the sequences of events described in this section and provide a point of reference for the rest of this book. Please familiarize yourself with the chart at the end of this chapter. In the text below look for the key words in bold print to follow the logic of the chart.

Every person has to make a faith decision concerning the ultimate cause of all things, which seeks to answer the age-old question, "How did all things begin?"

Even a casual look at the world reveals the existence of matter and creatures. Matter exists in various forms including solid, liquid, and gas. It not only includes the land, oceans and atmosphere but that which is seen in the heavens. Creatures exist in many forms from the lowliest of creatures to humanity itself. Creatures possess life. The first issue facing anyone is "What came first?" Matter or Creatures? Does a reasonable answer exist on which to base our faith?

B. Why is There a Need for Truth?

As we will see, the answer to the question about the ultimate cause of all things can be only one of two possibilities. Either a conscious being was the first cause of all things or unconscious matter was the first cause.

The issues of whether or not God exists and if He has revealed Himself through His Word, are partly a result of the worldly thinking of today that questions whether or not truth exists. For example, many people boldly claim, "There is no truth," but a simple analysis of that statement reveals it must be inaccurate because that sentence is stated as though it is true. If there "is no truth," then how can one determine that statement is true? One of the first principles of reasoning (a sufficient ground of explanation or a logical defense), is that a statement which is self-contradictory, in that it refutes itself, cannot be true. Another statement of that type is "Doctrine doesn't matter," but that is itself a statement of doctrine.

The statements, "There is no truth" and "There is truth" are mutually exclusive meaning only one of the statements can be true. It also confirms that one of these two statements must be true. The statement "There is truth" is logically true because the opposite, "There is no truth," is false because it contradicts itself, being self-refuting.

“There is truth” is true in an absolute sense. Absolute truth is objective truth because it is based on fact and not emotion. In other words how one feels does not determine what is true. Secular thinking does not believe that God exists and then concludes that the Bible, His Word, is not accurate. Spiritual thinking believes that God exists and that His Word is inspired and without error. What some people fail to understand is that spiritual thinking is not simply human reason, but rather it is reasoning based on an honest evaluation of the facts.

The existence of God cannot be proven beyond a reasonable doubt⁵ without defending the existence of truth. For the most part, modern culture has abandoned the concept of unemotional, objective truth concerning moral issues and has based its beliefs on perceptions of the physical world, not recognizing the absolute standards set by God. One result is rampant immorality. The church has moved away from a quest to know and proclaim truth in an attempt to make people feel better, teaching them to embrace personal sins instead of encouraging correction of them as needed through a change of thought, speech, or action to align with God’s moral design. This distortion of truth is frequently driven by money and fame. Sadly, the truth of God’s Word is often diluted so that people will stay at a particular church, have their emotions uplifted for a time, and give their money.

Truth cannot be legitimately established by prevailing public opinion, for history has shown public opinion to be incorrect many times. At one time, most of the people in the world thought it was impossible to sail one direction on the ocean and eventually return to the same place without turning around. Now we objectively know that it is possible to sail around the world in one direction. Truth is truth, no matter the public opinion for or against it.

There is value in understanding the perceptions and fears people inherently possess, such as the fear of changing from a false perception of the workings of the world to a true one. Many people of the world face severe persecution and even death if they change from one religious worldview to another. Compassion and clarity are needed while ministering to them. As Christians more fully understand false worldviews, they will be better able to communicate to others who hold these views and the fears these views inspire so that hopefully their perceptions and evaluations of life will be changed. On the whole, people either have to return to what they knew about finding truth, or be taught the basic elements of how to find it.

Sadly, it is becoming more and more apparent that people lack the training and ability to gather and analyze facts, even though information is available in massive quantities. This is true for Believer and unbeliever alike. A new generation has emerged that desires entertainment rather than education. Often public education seeks to program the student with the current secular worldview without an honest presentation of opposing viewpoints. For example, many schools will not permit a discussion of Creationism (the earth was created by a divine being) in their science classrooms. This prohibition is intellectually dishonest and leads to intellectual decline. The new focus for many is entertainment that seeks good feelings rather than anything of intellectual substance.

For the most part, the skill of reasoning has been lost and with that skill, the ability to think rationally (based on sound reason) as well. Instead, many people have been conditioned to quickly and emotionally react to circumstances rather than to think, understand, reason, and then respond in ways that benefit themselves and society. The way money is spent is a good example of how people get conditioned to emotionally respond to various products that make them feel better instead of using the funds as wise stewards of God. Sometimes people even choose to purchase what they want, instead of paying their financial obligations. Sound reasoning objectively evaluates the options and then makes the best decision with minimal input from the emotions.

Several generations of people are now asking “why” they should believe certain things. This is a good and valid question but without the ability to reason to an answer based in truth, confusion results. People who do not believe truth exists, or that it is different for different people, no longer consider truth as an issue in life. When the desire to find truth is gone, the ability to find truth doesn’t matter, which results in attitudes driven by emotion instead of rational thought (2 Pet 2:12; Jude 1:10). Many people today have embraced and boldly proclaimed that humans are no more than advanced animals with innate animal tendencies driven by emotions, yet there are distinct differences between animals and humans that are part of their design. The world is yet to see the full effects of such emotional responses because they will go from bad to worse in the last days (2 Tim 3:13).

Truth must exist for anyone to definitely state whether “God” or “Matter” is the ultimate cause of all things. The reasoning of the ultimate cause will be presented in what is termed “Arguments.” The word “argument” means

⁵ “Reasonable doubt” refers to a high standard of truth often used in reference to courts of law where evidence is presented in such a way that no reasonable person would seek to contradict it.

to present a logical set of reasons that are designed to provide evidence to prove a point.⁶ It is a common means of discussion and does not automatically mean an emotionally heated debate.

While considering the following arguments realize that only one of these has to be true to prove that God exists.

C. God or Matter? (See **God vs Matter Insert** which will be referred to throughout this study or see the chart at the end of this chapter)

As previously discussed, throughout all of history philosophers have sought to answer the question of the ultimate cause of everything. Science tells us that where there is an effect, there is a cause. Your body is an effect, your parents the cause and so on back to the first cause of all the effects now observed. Philosophers have seriously sought the answer to this question for thousands of years and have reached the conclusion that either some “one” or some “thing” has always been in existence as the ultimate cause. Someone or something is eternal, having no beginning, thus no cause. Since no human existed at the very beginning of all things, either starting point selected begins with an act of faith. Faith has no merit in itself for it is only as good as its object, and history has proven many people sincerely believe the wrong things. The answer to the question of ultimate cause places faith either in a person or a thing, **God** (the “person”) or **Matter** (the “thing”). If a person believes that **Matter** first existed, and out of a lifeless, unconscious piece of material came an active and conscious being, that belief has no merit because it is unreasonable.

Those who choose to believe that an eternal **God** is the uncaused cause (that which has no beginning, because beginnings require a cause) can have hope (faith about the future) because their faith is reasonable. Their faith is in a conscious, thinking being with the knowledge and power to create. Those who choose to believe that **Matter** is eternal can only evaluate existence from personal observations and perceptions, which will never provide absolute answers because of the inherent limitations of personal experience. How could that which is not alive (**Matter**) suddenly become alive with a functional design? The result of an initial decision that **Matter** is eternal will eventually lead to despair because the perceptions are always subject to change and thus one comes to believe there are no trustworthy absolutes.

It requires a great leap of faith to believe that **Matter** first existed and out of a lifeless, unconscious piece of material came an active and conscious being. Life itself teaches that something designed requires a designer. The clothing you are wearing is proof of a designer, like the house you live in and the vehicle in which you travel. Design does not happen by chance. It is therefore reasonable to believe that a conscious being could create another conscious being. This requires only a small step of faith. What is the evidence for either position, **God** or **Matter**? This will be explored in greater detail within the chapters of this book.

D. Revelation (See chart: **Revelation** and **Observation**)

It is a simple step of faith to believe that a Creator who made a conscious being would desire to communicate with that being. The communication would be a **Revelation** of himself. If you believe the Creator has communicated then the most important pursuit of life should be to find out what He revealed and what it means. Each individual who believes that God reveals Himself may then seek to find the truth about what He has revealed to His creation, seeking to answer the question “**What is it?**” This search provides an opportunity to find satisfactory answers to the issues of life with the potential to form a relationship with the Creator.

If a person chooses not to believe in a Creator, then the language of life (its structure, order and design) has no significance or meaning. It just “exists,” with no answer to the ultimate cause. This belief requires that a person rely only on personal **Observation** and implies that the Creator did not reveal Himself. If that is true then there is no intelligence behind existing life, and no explanation for its amazing structure and order. The result is a mass of questions with no certain answers and thus **Confusion** with no possibility of knowing if truth exists or what it is.

This step, as with others, may not be a conscious choice on the part of an individual but if a relationship with God is pursued, it is the next step in learning about Him for it reveals who He is.

E. Inspiration (See chart: **Inspiration** and **Perception**)

If God revealed Himself, (evidence will show He did), then it is reasonable to believe that this divinely inspired Revelation would be without error (inerrant). This **Inspiration** then can be trusted to search for answers to the

⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/argument>, August 17, 2020

major issues of life, since it is knowledge imparted from the Creator Himself. The reasoning creature thus has the potential for **Confidence** in the pursuit of God's revelation concerning Himself and His plan.

If the choice is made not to believe the Creator revealed Himself, only personal **Perception** from observation is left to gather and analyze data. **Perception** is subject to change because it frequently changes or differs from person to person. One man may view a painting as beautiful while the other does not. It is based on individual perception. Seeking to understand life only from personal perception and experience will inevitably lead to all kinds of **Doubt**, because individuals are always seeking a different or better perception (Prov 3:5). Human perception alone can never be fully trusted as ultimate truth.

The inspired Word of God reveals that the ultimate test of truth revolves around Jesus Christ (John 15:5-16). Since He is God who became man (John 1:1-3, 14), Jesus' life and words are the standards by which we should evaluate our thinking and actions (1 Tim 6:3-4). Thus, they provide a means to make spiritual adjustments in our thoughts and actions.

At times Believers, and not just new ones, can begin to question this divinely inspired revelation when they begin to hear and believe incorrect information. The falsehoods are rampant on the internet seeking to discredit the Bible as God's inerrant Word. As with other good things in life, the more God's inspired Word is studied, the more it is appreciated and relied on for information about life itself. As one grows spiritually, seeing God's Word to be accurate, spiritual **Confidence** will also increase.

When a person's **Confidence** is shattered one must answer again (be it consciously or unconsciously) whether or not God is the first cause of all things, and if He would reveal Himself perfectly. Faith placed back in those truths returns the Believer to a proper approach to learning.

F. Pursuits (See chart: **Author's Will** and **Self-Will**)

If the step of faith that God revealed Himself is made based on the evidence, then His Will should be sought. This kind of study focuses on God's Will, which is the **Author's Will**, without trying to read personal desires into His words. The pursuit to find the **Author** of Scripture's **Will** manifests **Humility** which is a requirement of the correct understanding and use of His revealed Word (Jas 1:21).

If an individual chooses to replace God's revelation with personal will, this pursuit is called **Self-Will** and manifests **Arrogance** (Jas 4:13-17) because the person is acting like they know more than an all-knowing God.

While it is easy for anyone to change from seeking God's will to trying to justify **Self-Will**, if that problem is identified, a reversal in thought should be made. Again, whether consciously or not, the student again must believe God is the revealer of inspired truth that is worthy of study. The more humbly (**Humility**) a person seeks the **Author's Will** the more confidence and assurance will be gained from His Word (1 John 3:18-21).

G. Expectations (See chart: **Truth** and **Deception**)

When the Author's Will is sought then **Truth** can be found, for God is the Author of it. When a person becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ through the study and application of His Word, the **Truth** is promised (John 8:31-32). Only by accepting the **Truth** can one have the **Assurance** of life in eternity.

Self-Will can only lead to **Deception** (1 Cor 3:18-23; Col 2:8), for it lacks a solid basis of understanding **Truth**. Self-Will interprets truth through personal feelings rather than objective facts. **Deception** is frequently manifested in **Anger, Fear, and Guilt** because the pursuit of Self-Will is always frustrated by a lack of lasting results such as human joy and peace of soul.

Again, Believers can start to think and act like unbelievers when they choose to follow the world's system of thinking and living. The result is that they think and act like they are their own god and not as children of the Almighty God. When a Believer begins thinking and acting like an unbeliever there is the need to be reminded that there is a Creator of all things, who has revealed Himself and thus His will. Therefore, **Truth** exists and can be found. This change of mind may not be consciously done, but it is still at the heart of real change that honors God.

God's Word tells us that spiritual things are discerned (1 Cor 2:14-15). An unbeliever can make a decision concerning the existence of a Creator, His revelation of Himself and the accuracy of the revelation, but an unbeliever cannot understand or live the Christian life because confusion reigns when God is not at the center

of one's life (1 Cor 14:33). A person who has already believed in Jesus as Messiah, may proceed further in this study as a disciple. If you have not yet believed you may still proceed, seeking the evidence that follows to be able to make an informed decision rather than an emotional one. Hopefully, one day you too may study as a disciple.

H. **Changes** (See chart: **Changed Life** and **Change World**)

If a person seeks to live according to the Author's Will (John 7:17) the result will be a **Changed Life** which will change the world for the better (if only in a small way). A **Changed Life** is recognized by unselfish **Service** and not service that seeks to draw attention to self for the purpose of self-glory.

People who seek to live by Self-Will attempt to **Change the World** to better their life (Jdg 21:25; Prov 12:15; 21:2). This pursuit only results in **Frustration** because of the inherent lack of the necessary power to truly change the world for the better by oneself.

I. **Results** (See chart: **Transformed** and **Conformed**)

A person who is willing for their life to be changed by the Lord by following His instructions will be **Transformed** into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This will result in a special knowledge from the experience of transformation as one learns to **Love God and Others** as He does. This is not just knowing the theology (the systematic study of God) of Truth, but living the Truth (1 John 4:7-21).

A person who is not willing to let their life be changed by the Lord will be **Conformed** to the worldly systems of faith. This will produce a life of **Discontent** that is never satisfied for an extended time with anyone or anything. Conformity to the world is known for its conditional love that only returns love to those who serve them, the exact opposite of how Christ loved us (1 John 4:19).

The internal battles to be **Transformed** into the image of Christ or be **Conformed** to the world are great tests of spiritual growth because **Love for God and Others** can decrease (Matt 24:12). Even Believers can grow tired of doing good, especially for those who lose appreciation of the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 12:3; 1 Thes 5:14). The degree of our **Love for God and Others** is directly related to our obedience to His commands, the foremost being love (John 14:15,21,23-24).

J. **Hope** (See chart: **Hope** and **Worldly Pursuits**)

Transformed people have a consistent Biblical **Hope** that is not just wishful thinking. It is this **Hope** that leads to **Peace** concerning time and eternity and resides in the soul. **Peace**, by definition, is an absence of conflict. The **Peace** the Lord brings passes all understanding, meaning that it is not fully describable by human vocabulary (Php 4:6-7). **Peace** of soul is acquired in increasing degrees as one is more and more transformed into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29).

People who are involved in **Worldly Pursuits** are searching frantically for happiness. This becomes manifested in **Desperation** to achieve the fame, fortune, power or pleasure that has deceived them into believing that these temptations will satisfy the longing of their souls. The Believer already possesses the reality of all of those desires as a child of God. A Believer is famous as a child of the King; has fortune through eternal inheritance; power from the Holy Spirit abiding within; and pleasure that comes from **Peace** of soul. All the world can offer are counterfeits which are temporal, fleeting, and frustrating.

Hope can be lost in the life of a Believer along with the **Peace** that accompanies it. To regain this blessing in time, go back to the beginning and start over. God? Or Matter? (Study and follow the **God Line** of the chart for assistance in spiritual growth.)

K. **Summary**

Following these simple steps of faith it is easy to accept that the Creator would speak literal truth and thus we may be assured that what He says is accurate. His Truth can lead to a changed life of service, rather than a self-serving life seeking only to survive. It can also lead to a transformed life that loves the Creator in return and others He has made. Along with these understandings and assurances, a great hope is available that can result in peace of soul. When the Creator makes promises about eternity they are worthy of our faith.

If a person rejects the Creator and wants nothing to do with Him, the result is Self-Will that relies on personal understanding that is always incomplete. Rejection of the Creator actually denies the evidence and thus manifests Arrogance which indicates Deception. When an individual is deceived it leads to a life of Anger, Fear,

and Guilt as a person consistently realizes their personal inadequacies. At this point people attempt to Change the World without being Transformed by the Creator. They find that the world is hard to change, so their life is one of Frustration, trying to get things arranged their own way. Those who seek to order their world end up Discontented with everything because worldly pursuits never satisfy for long. The end result is desperation until they reach a point of wondering if anything in life is worthwhile.

The good news is that God has provided overwhelming evidence that a person can be fully assured of their eternal home and thus be able to have peace in time.

These first few chapters are an overview of why Christians believe what they do and how this belief can be lived in a practical way. It is the “big picture” into which everything fits as the creation aligns with its Creator. It is like the outside edges of a jigsaw puzzle into which the picture fits. What will come forth through this study is a clearer and greater appreciation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The best way to approach this study is to keep the big picture in mind as you put the pieces in place, seeing greater evidence for each piece.

Every human being is responsible to seek the right answers to the major questions of life (Rom 1:20). Is there a God? Which one? Did He communicate with His creation? Was His communication done without error? Many of the answers to these issues require just a simple “I believe” or “I don’t believe,” but the correct answer to the first question, “Is there a God?” leads to the correct answer of other questions that follow.

The reasonable answers chosen in this book to the important questions of life form the foundation of a view of the world by which all other facts should be interpreted. When reasoning is correct it will stand the test of evaluation by evidence. Evidence for the conclusions reached in this book will be presented from various sources to validate the reasoning is correct.

The next chapter will begin to explore in more depth the issues of creation, seeking a reasonable answer to how all things began. It will examine the reasons why God must exist and also the problems with evolutionary thought. It will also identify the Creator. Is it the Elohim of the Bible or some other “god?”

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

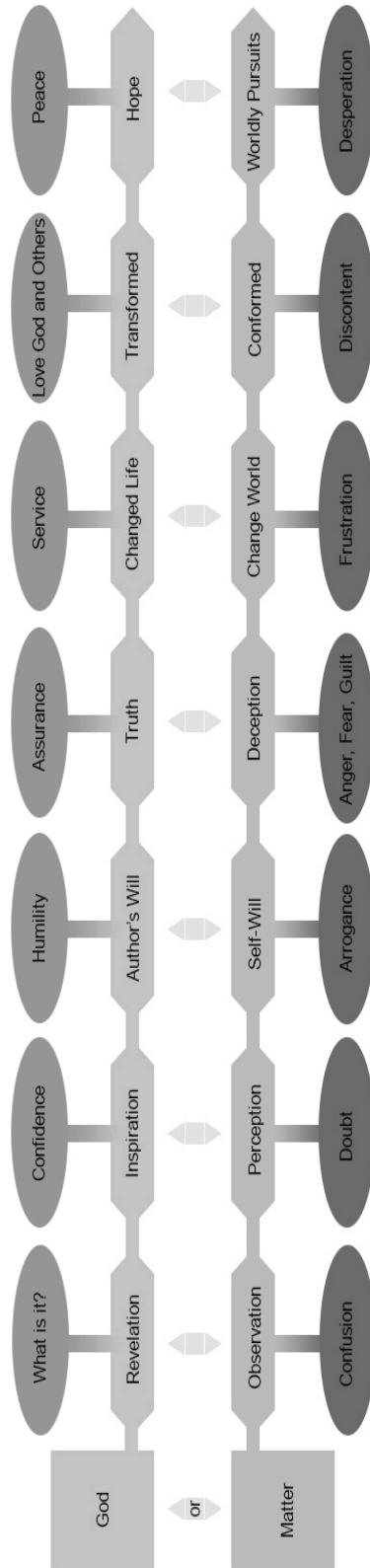
The lack of the acceptance that absolute and objective truth exists, taught at an early age, easily leads to a rise in willful disobedience to one’s parents, which the Apostle Paul said was a characteristic of the “last days” (2 Tim 3:2-4).

Some Personal Questions:

- ✓ **Should you learn the Word of God or trust in yourself? Why?**
- ✓ **Should you trust the Word of God or the word of man? Why?**
- ✓ **Should you pursue the things of God or the things of man? Why?**
- ✓ **Should you love God and others or yourself? Why?**

God vs Matter

Two Lines of Belief



Chapter 2

How Did All Things Begin?

How Did All Things Begin?

The answer to this question holds primary importance to a correct view of the world. It is, in fact, the beginning point for Believers so that they may “defend the faith” as prescribed by Scripture (1 Pet 3:15). This defense begins with knowing what evidence exists for the existence of God. The major topic in this chapter will consider which god is the right one and the last section will briefly explain evolutionary theory so the student will become somewhat familiar with the terminology. If only one argument for the existence of God is correct, that is sufficient proof that He exists. Evolution requires all of its arguments to be correct for it to be true.

A. Arguments for the Existence of God⁷

Over the course of history five major arguments have been made for God’s existence. These will be simply explained because they are the result of simple reasoning.

1. Cosmological: The Cause–Effect Argument

This argument for the existence of God logically reasons back in time to the need for an ultimate cause for the beginning of the universe. Simply stated, “Anything that comes into existence has a cause.” There is another argument that looks at the present universe and reasons back to the beginning seeking an ultimate cause that has sustained the earth. This is called the “Vertical Cosmological Argument.”

Simply stated, there must be an ultimate cause of both the existence and endurance of this world in which we live. What is currently observed in all of creation are effects, or results, for which there must be an ultimate cause.

2. Ontological: The Perfect Being Argument

This approach is from the innate realization in man that there exists an absolutely perfect and necessary Being. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), a philosopher and theologian, first expressed the concept. The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) first named it the “Ontological” argument when he attacked the statement. This approach has been highly debated through the centuries, but is still worthy of consideration.

3. Anthropological: The Life to Life Argument

Based on the biology, consciousness, and location of man in the universe, there must be one who created, designed, and sustains it.

4. Teleological: The Design to Designer Argument

This argument is found in the early Greek philosophy of Plato (c.= circa or about; c.427-347 B.C.), Socrates (470-399 B.C.), and Philo (25 B.C.-50 A.D.). Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.), a Catholic scholar, listed five ways to prove there was a God. His arguments simply stated are, that Motion, Cause, Perfection, Design, and Necessity all prove the existence of a Creator God.⁸ He called this proof the “Teleological” argument “for the governance of the world.” He said,

The way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things that lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously [by chance], but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.⁹

This argument has come to be known as the “Design Hypothesis,”¹⁰ (an “hypothesis” is a theory that is proposed for evaluation) which offers several pieces of evidence. The theory is explained very well by Lee Strobel with six arguments:

⁷ See the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* by Norman Geisler, 1998, for a more detailed treatment

⁸ <https://www.anomalien.com/thomas-aquinass-five-proofs-of-the-existence-of-god>, June 19, 2020

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1485

¹⁰ See *Case for a Creator*, 2009, by Lee Strobel and *One Heartbeat Away*, 2005, by Mark Cahill

Cosmology refers to the “study of the world.” Scientists are converting today in large numbers to the evidence that the universe had a beginning; therefore it has not always eternally existed. The Cause-Effect principle (see B.1.) is being accepted as accurate. They accept that the universe had a beginning.

[illegible]

The earth is intricately choreographed in all its geological and chemical processes, which indicates a unique position in the universe that is able to sustain life. John A. O’Keefe, former head of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States, known as NASA, a Harvard University educated astrophysicist said, “It is my view that these circumstances indicate the universe was created for man to live in.”¹¹

Charles Darwin said, "If it could be demonstrated that any complex [internal] organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."¹² Biochemist Michael Behe has demonstrated that Darwin's theory is not true by means of his description of "irreducibly complex" molecular machines.¹³ There exists microscopic organisms, such as cilia and bacterial flagella that are highly unlikely to have been built by evolution and chance, as Darwin would suggest. Since the first generation of the organism could not live or reproduce without certain parts, there would never have been a second generation to evolve. Other examples include transporting proteins to different parts of the body with cells and even the intricate process of blood-clotting. These are all highly complex procedures that are anything but simple and reasonably require a designer.

The six feet of DNA (biological material which makes up the structure of cells in the human body) coiled inside every one of our body's one hundred trillion cells contains a four-letter chemical alphabet that spells out precise assembly instructions for all the proteins from which our bodies are made. Cambridge University (United Kingdom) educated Stephen Meyer demonstrated that no hypothesis has come close to explaining how information got into biological matter by naturalistic means.¹⁴ This information requires intelligence beyond itself.

Modern studies have shown that consciousness cannot be explained by our knowledge of chemistry and physics. Neurosurgeons can trigger reactions and speech by stimulating parts of the brain while operating on patients, but the patient responds by saying, “you did that,” knowing that it was not something they initiated by their choice.

This was first introduced by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who believed that a moral being had to be made or taught by another. He argued that moral requirements are based on a standard of rationality that he called the “Categorical Imperative,”¹⁵ which concluded that because absolutes exist there must be an absolute moral being to implant the concept.

¹² Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species: A Facsimile of the First Edition*, Harvard University Press, 1964, p 189

¹⁴ Stephen C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design*, 2010

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B. Who is This Creator?

Is There One God (Monotheism) or Many Gods (Polytheism)?

Plotinus (Greek philosopher 204-270 A.D.) noted that all plurality presupposes unity,¹⁶ indicating it is not reasonable to believe that one God evolved from many gods but instead the opposite – that the belief in many gods evolved from the belief in one God who had different attributes.

It is evident that the entire universe, not just the earth, was fine-tuned for the sustenance of human life. This speaks of one intelligent Creator and Designer, not a group of beings or a combination of competing forces seeking to harmonize all the laws of physics and biology so life can exist. This is called The Anthropic Principle which implies that the entire universe was one, with one Designer and purpose from the very beginning of its existence.

Some examples of the extent to which the universe is fine-tuned, as explained by www.gotquestions.org, are seen in:¹⁷

- **The unique properties of water:** Every known life form depends on water. Thankfully, unlike every other substance known to man, water's solid form (ice) is less dense than its liquid form. This causes ice to float. If ice did not float, our planet would experience runaway freezing. Other important properties of water include its solvency, cohesiveness, adhesiveness, and other thermal properties.
- **Earth's atmosphere:** If there were too much of just one of the many gases which make up our atmosphere, our planet would suffer a runaway greenhouse effect. On the other hand, if there were not enough of these gases, life on this planet would be devastated by cosmic radiation.
- **Earth's reflectivity or "albedo"** (the total amount of light reflected off the planet versus the total amount of light absorbed): If Earth's albedo were much greater than it is now, we would experience runaway freezing. If it were much less than it is, we would experience a runaway greenhouse effect.
- **Earth's magnetic field:** If it were much weaker, our planet would be devastated by cosmic radiation. If it were much stronger, we would be devastated by severe electromagnetic storms.
- **Earth's place in the solar system:** If we were much further from the sun, our planet's water would freeze. If we were much closer, it would boil. This is just one of numerous examples of how our privileged place in the solar system allows for life on Earth.
- **Our solar system's place in the galaxy:** Once again, there are numerous examples of this. For instance, if our solar system were too close to the center of our galaxy, or to any of the spiral arms at its edge, or any cluster of stars, for that matter, our planet would be devastated by cosmic radiation.
- **The color of our sun:** If the sun were much redder, on the one hand, or bluer, on the other, photosynthesis would be impeded. Photosynthesis is a natural biochemical process crucial to life on Earth.

All the Polytheistic viewpoints speak of gods who are finite "within the universe" and not of a God who "transcends the universe" (Isa 40:12). If the so-called "gods" are in the universe, then they came into existence and were the result of a cause. Therefore, they are not eternal.

C. Challenging the Elohim of the Bible (Satan's attempt to re-describe and discredit Elohim)

1. All World Religions Have a Creator-God but It Is Faulty Reasoning to Assume All Believe Their Creator-God to Be the Same One

Since all the religions of the world have a creator-god some claim that all religions are referring to the same God. This does not however prove that all religions of the world are the same or that they are seeking the same things while simply using different words. It is not simply a battle of words. While all the religions have a creator-god, their descriptions differ greatly.

2. Those Who Believe That From Matter Evolved All Things, Also Apply That Thinking to Religious Viewpoints. They Believe That Religious Thinking Evolved from Many Gods to Just One.

This viewpoint contradicts normal evolutionary reasoning that claims one living cell became a multitude of different species. This is a prime example of people who force data to fit a preconceived worldview.

¹⁶ Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Books, 2000, p 596

¹⁷ <https://www.gotquestions.org/anthropic-principle.html>, October 16, 2017

3. Some Examples of Evolutionary Viewpoint Are Seen In the Following Beliefs of Humanity

- **Mana or Fetishism** is the belief in a spiritual force that supposedly resides in an object, like an idol. The object is thought to possess magical powers and is often manifested in sexual expressions.¹⁸
- **Animism** which states that intelligent spiritual forces exist in non-human entities such as animals, plants, and inanimate objects. It is the belief that natural objects, natural phenomena, and the universe itself possesses souls.¹⁹
- **Polytheism** is the belief that there is more than one divine being and is the foundation of the belief that human spirits become divine.²⁰
- **Henotheism** is the worship of a particular god without disbelieving in the existence of others. It includes serving many gods but worshipping just one.²¹
- **Monotheism** which believes in the worship of one god but evolutionary thinking believes that one personal god evolved from many.

D. **Evolution:** The Argument for Matter Being the Ultimate Cause of All Things (See Appendix: Evolution for more information)

1. Introduction

Many people have an evolutionary worldview as a basis of their beliefs without realizing it. For example, “reincarnation,” or “transmigration of souls,” believes that a soul never dies but continues to return to another body. Some religions believe souls only come back as humans while others believe that people may return as grasshoppers or some other creature. Many believe that what creature they return as is based on how well they did in the past life. This belief has its basis in evolutionary thought. Because evolution is becoming more widespread through the educational systems of the world, this information is included in this book to counter the claims made by evolutionists. This part of the study is not designed to make a person an expert in this field, but instead to provide reasonable explanations in case the student of the Word of God encounters this worldview.

There has been an ongoing battle between Creationism and Darwinian Evolution, especially since the middle 1800's. Darwinian Evolution is a system of thought, articulated by Charles Darwin (1809-1882 A.D.), that from single celled creatures came all living things. One of the main features of this theory is that one species could evolve into another species, such as a bird becoming a reptile or a reptile becoming a human. Many have tried to develop a system that is a combination of both, but parts of each system are at irreconcilable odds with the other. There is only one correct solution.

Those who believe in evolution claim that there is a “scientific” explanation of data that must exclude any reference to a Creator or religion in order to remain “scientific.” Those who believe in creation claim their viewpoint is a better explanation of the evidence. These two groups are frequently called Evolutionists and Creationists. Often, the two groups are considering the same evidence but reach different conclusions. In reality, the interpretation of the facts is based on personal assumptions that form personal worldviews. As previously noted, someone or something has to be eternal for there to exist an Ultimate or Primary Cause of all things, so either God or Matter must have always existed. Some people may attempt to claim that both God and Matter have always existed, but both Evolutionists and Creationists alike emphatically deny the possibility that both a person and matter may be eternal. “Theistic Evolution,” which believes that God caused the evolutionary process, must allegorize the Scripture (not read it literally) to try to justify that viewpoint. A literal reading of the Word of God will not allow this viewpoint.

Through an individual's worldview (that must either begin with God or Matter to remain objectively consistent), a theory is developed to analyze evidence in relationship to other evidence. Through these analyses a personal philosophical model of how to interpret other evidence is developed. Either viewpoint of the origin of all things will be affected by the faith viewpoint accepted concerning the Ultimate Cause.

¹⁸ <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/fetishism>, February 20, 2015

¹⁹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/animism>, February 20, 2015

²⁰ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/polytheism>, February 20, 2015

²¹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/henotheism>, February 20, 2015

A “fact” by definition is something that possesses actual existence or is an actual occurrence.²² Data is a compilation of facts so an analysis can be made. The so-called “Scientific Method” of analysis requires facts that are observable, measurable, and repeatable. The “Scientific Method” fails to be valuable to either argument because no human has existed forever.

If a person by faith totally rejects evolutionary viewpoint this is unsatisfactory in the current culture. More information is needed if that person dares to be a witness of Christ to others. The educational system has made evolution an issue in most countries of the world and is spreading to others. There are many people who accept Evolution as fact (including many of the world religions), and way too many others who accept the methods of the evolutionary thought process, usually without realizing it. Evolutionary principles have been applied to things like law and even the reading of the Scriptures.²³

2. The Seven Requirements of Evolution

All of these must be true for Evolution to be true. This is not stated by any who believe in Evolution as the Ultimate Cause of all things, but the main points are dependent upon one another, so if one item fails they all fail. The last point is the fatal flaw in the theory.

a. **All change is at the same rate as is observed today.** (Consistency)

This says that all natural processes (like temperature, rainfall, and erosion) presently in operation are sufficient to account for all geological changes. This is called, “Geological Uniformitarianism” in textbooks. This viewpoint assumes extended consistency in nature and doesn’t account for catastrophes (a violent and sudden change in the normal function of life, like an earthquake or flood).

b. **Only the fittest survive.** (Adaptability)

This requirement of Evolution states that only the most adaptive and prolific of the genetic strains survived which must be tested with the fossil record. This is not simply about strength but fitness to adapt to environment. The “fossil record” refers to the skeletal bones recovered by scientists. This is known in textbooks as “survival of the fittest.” By any scientific standards the fittest did not survive but many of them were thrown together in a catastrophe. Even evolutionists will admit that many of the “fittest” did not survive like the Woolly Mammoth (an ancient elephant).

c. **The environment determines all evolutionary changes.** (Nature dictates change)

This belief is that conditions in the environment control and govern changes in the natures of animals and plants through the increased use of some internal organs and the decreased use of others. It further believes that the changes were transmitted genetically to the offspring. Genetics involve the way that various physical characteristics are transmitted from one generation to the next. It is why mice produce mice and horses produce horses. While there is some change within the species there is no evidence that one species can be so changed by the environment so as to become another species.

This is known as “Environmental Determinism.” This view believes that a better environment will produce better people and that decisions are only responses to an individual’s environment and that pure acts of will do not exist.

d. **Breeding with close family members is the best way to produce superior offspring.** (Inbreeding)

This theory was viewed to be the best way to develop superior genetic strains. This is known as “Natural Selection” and is accomplished through “Inbreeding.” This concentrates on hereditary characteristics but has clearly been shown to not be beneficial. Nothing tears down a family strain faster than inbreeding (offspring produced from close relatives) and nothing builds it faster than cross-breeding with those outside the immediate family. Any genetic disruption that leads to a mutation is usually not superior in the animal kingdom.

e. **Unborn mammals all have similar characteristics.** (Comparison)

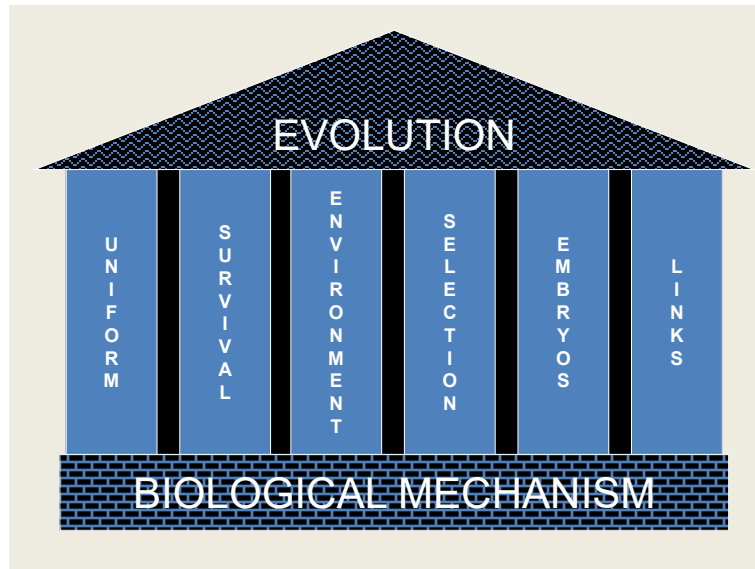
This viewpoint draws a conclusion from the observation of unborn mammals. The data shows that the organs in mammals develop the same in a sequential pattern, so they must have evolved from a common ancestor. These mammals, before they are born, are called “embryos.” This is known as “Comparative Embryology” and is the study of human and animal embryos. An equally valid interpretation of the data is that they came from a common designer which is why they develop in a similar sequence.

²² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fact>, February 20, 2015

²³ For a magnificent analysis and presentation of major worldviews see, *Understanding the Times*, Dr. David A. Noebel, Summit Press, USA, 2006, or *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, Thomas Nelson Publishers, USA, 2017.

- f. **There are missing fossils that will fill in the missing developmental stages of the theory.** (Missing data as an argument from silence)
 This view claims that the missing pieces of the evolutionary changes just haven't been found yet in the fossil record. By faith there is the assumption that the pieces will eventually be discovered. This is known as "Missing Links." They are still missing. Therefore, in what is described by evolutionists as scientific is still the evidence of faith that these "missing links" will be found.
- g. **There must be a biological mechanism for one species to change to another.** (Methodology)
 This final piece of the argument is the most important because without a method for the changing of species the entire theory falls apart. This argument believes that eventually a scientific way for one species to change to another species will be found. No one disagrees with the fact that changes do occur within a species, but there is a serious disagreement as to whether or not one species (like a frog) can change to another (like a gorilla). This is known as the "Biological Mechanism" (how the species changed). This is another example of evidence of the use of faith in the so-called scientific Theory of Evolution.

The following chart presents the entire structure of evolution which is built on the premise that there exists a way for one species to change into another. If a biological mechanism does not exist the entire theory fails. The result is that there exists no evidence for the possibility that from unconscious matter came conscious life.



3. **To Believe Evolution All of These Statements Must Be Believed, but to Believe Any of Them Is Unreasonable**
- a. **Nothing produces everything.**
 It is like saying, "Oh, there it is!" when it did not exist before. It is not only that everything came into being without a cause but it came into being with design and function.
- b. **Non-life produces life.**
 This claims that suddenly, with no cause, life just happened. This violates the scientific discovery that the entire universe is in such a unique state of balance that if that balance were to change in the slightest life would cease to exist.
- c. **Randomness produces complex organization.**
 This is like having a pile of strings on the floor that somehow, without an intelligent designer, come together in a way that harmony and beautiful music could occur. It is like having a jigsaw puzzle with a lot of pieces, that was not initially designed, but amazingly fit itself together without any intellect behind it.

d. Chaos produces information.

This is a belief equivalent to throwing a lot of ink and trees into a hurricane and if given enough time a library would result appearing to have been intelligently designed. Those who believe this have energy without wisdom.

e. Unconsciousness produces consciousness.

This belief is that an unknown thought at an unknown time came into existence and asked, "Who am I?" Then that thought proceeded to develop intelligence without any help from an outside source and eventually evolved into life.

f. Non-reason produces reason.

How could chaos determine what would be a rational first step? How would structures ever be built? If all that existed was chaos, how would structure ever come from it?

E. Summary

The reasonable answer to the question, "How did all things begin?" is that a conscious being was the ultimate cause of all things. We know Him as The Creator.

This chapter has shown that it is reasonable to believe that the God of the Jews and Christians, known as Elohim, is the creator of all things.

All the world religions quickly disagree on the attributes of their "creator-god" so the world religions do not believe in the same God. The Christian God is eternal and the Ultimate Cause of all things. Matter alone simply lacked the power and intelligence to make this world with its amazing design and structure.

The "theory" of Creationism has the most reasonable explanation of the scientific facts. It fully explains what exists in contrast to the opposing theory of evolution. Both theories are issues of faith.

The fact that all world religions recognize a Creator means that all make themselves without excuse for rejecting the One true God (Rom 1:20).

Believers must return to the roots of the Christian faith and learn the basics upon which their belief system was established (Heb 5:12). They not only need to know what they believe but also why the foundations of the faith are reasonable to believe.

The importance of considering or reviewing the foundation laid by our Lord Himself cannot be overemphasized (1 Tim 6:3-5). It is very easy to be distracted even by good information and lose sight of the "big picture" of our existence and the foundational doctrines upon which the Christian faith is built. Life will never make any sense if God's viewpoint is not prayerfully sought and considered. A person can spend the rest of life exploring the details, but never understand the reasons for human history (2 Tim 3:7).

Has the true Creator God, the Intelligence behind the Creation, revealed Himself? If so, How? The answers will follow in the next chapter.

For Personal Study:

- ✓ List and describe the five arguments for the existence of God.
- ✓ What do you believe is the strongest argument and why?
- ✓ List and describe the six areas of science that indicate intelligent design.
- ✓ Which one do you believe is the strongest and why?

- ✓ **What is the problem with believing that all world religions recognize the same “creator-god?”**
- ✓ **Describe the problem with evolutionary reasoning as applied to world religions.**
- ✓ **List and describe the six pillars of evolutionary theory.**
- ✓ **Describe the importance of a “biological mechanism.”**
- ✓ **Give examples of the premises one must believe to accept evolution.**

Chapter 3

Would the Creator Communicate with His Creation?

Would the Creator Communicate with His Creation?

Would the Creator (Elohim) Communicate with His Creation or Not? (The Question of Revelation)

The answer to this question logically flows from the simple belief that a conscious, intelligent, powerful being created all things. As explored in the last chapter, evidence for God's (Elohim) existence is seen in multiple ways. Is it reasonable that He would communicate with His creation?

A. The Bible Claims to Be Part of God's Communication to His Creation

After a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, there are still decisions required every day. With so many different viewpoints available to choose from there are many questions we must ask. What is the standard? What about Elohim's Word? How was it communicated and transmitted? Is it reliable? Is it true? Who do I learn from?

The Genesis account of the beginning of the universe and man has become the most read and widely attacked record in the history of the world. Therefore, it would be wise to determine its credibility, since the Bible claims to be inspired by the Creator (2 Tim 3:16-17).

First, a seeker of truth must determine what God's written Word truly says and then honestly analyze the facts. Is the Biblical presentation of Creation and Revelation valid? There are so many different studies that connect to this topic such as: hermeneutics (principles of Bible study), canonicity (how and why the Bible was assembled in its current form), and faith. It would be great to analyze them all at once, but they must be analyzed individually and then understood in a systematic way. The system is designed to show how various facts relate to each other. All other viewpoints of creation do the same thing, analyze the data and interpret it. Each system of belief has rules of interpretation, standards of orthodoxy and conclusions concerning what is believable. A belief system is inherently assembled from analysis of the data. The conclusions are then obtained through reasoning, no matter how flawed the reasoning process may be. It is imperative to select the correct method.

B. Revelation From Adam to Moses – The Issues

One of the most frequently misunderstood issues of God's revelation concerns the time between the creation of Adam and the writings of Moses. The result of a literal reading of Scripture places the fall of Adam around 3960 B.C. This means the writings of Moses (who lived from 1525-1405 B.C.) would not have begun prior to 1500 B.C. If Moses began to write at the age of 100, what about the previous 2,500 years?

Some correctly point out that there were written records hundreds of years prior to the writings of Moses. Clearly there were written records from the Kingdom of Sumer (located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; known biblically as Shinar; Gen 10:10, 11:2) and Egypt. Ancient Sumer had ceased to be a major world power by the time of Moses, having been defeated by the ancient Babylonians. Moses was educated in "all the knowledge of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22), which implies he had a knowledge of history, math, and construction. Just because he knew about Egyptian culture does not imply that he did not know of his historical roots that could have easily been imparted to him by his mother (Exo 2:8-9). Many atheists (those who do not believe God exists) and agnostics (those who have doubts about the existence of God) believe that Moses just adapted to Israel what had already been established in other cultures. This belief is actually an evolutionary viewpoint of Monotheism, which simply stated is that mankind first believed in many gods and then evolved into belief in one god. The flaws in that line of thinking have already been previously noted.

C. Did Moses Simply Take the Ancient Myths and Adapt Them for Israel?

God's Word contains the answer. It is clear God revealed Himself and His plan to Adam. That information was passed through the godly line of Adam's son, Seth, and was unbroken to Noah. Noah passed the information on to his three sons but Shem and his line were the designated bearers of the truth.

The "Signs" mentioned in Genesis 1:14²⁴ established a foundation for revelation from Adam until Moses. Many believe that the stars were set to picture and teach God's plan, but not to mystically guide humanity. Whether that is true and to what extent needs more study and data. It is clear from every civilization in the world that the stars acted as the initial calendars to guide predominantly agricultural economies.

²⁴ **Gen 1:14** Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years;

Sometimes the Lord does not provide all the answers to our questions, but many times the answers are there if we diligently seek them (John 16:13). Some questions cannot be answered at this point in history, like *exactly* what our resurrection bodies will be able to do or *exactly* how the Millennial society will function. Other questions have reasonable answers that may not fit current opinion, or they may seem unreasonable to the modern mind. This includes issues like the global flood or the final destruction of the present heavens and earth followed by the creation of new ones. Even if God's Word stretches us beyond mere human reason, it is still reasonable to accept Divine revelation from an Omniscient God rather than man's philosophies.

The Biblical model of the divine creations of matter, creatures, space, and time is a reasonable model that does not require a leap of faith, but rather a simple step.

D. God's General Revelation from Adam to Moses

It is reasonable to ask how God's Word was transmitted during the time before Moses was instructed to write it. Some people attack the Genesis accounts of history by claiming that the revelation handed to Moses was simply oral tradition which has a tendency to be distorted. The distortion is removed when the people involved in passing on the information, with God's guidance, are interested in passing down the Truth. From what we read about the early heroes of the faith, they wanted their children to know exactly what their God expected of them and the promises of things to come. They would tell the events clearly and do so several different times, to be sure that the hearer understood it, then compare the ending story to the beginning story to assure they were the same. It is reasonable to expect an accurate transmission of God's message from one generation to the next.

There is a mass of information in the Bible that covers from Moses until the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, but there is very little information about the time from Adam until Moses or the time after the 2nd Advent, when the Millennial Kingdom begins. God provides what really needs to be known at the proper time (2 Pet 1:3) as He progressively reveals His Plan.

The "Signs" mentioned in Genesis 1:14 establish a foundation for revelation from Adam until the Law of Moses. This position is upheld by the oral tradition of the Jews. According to Scripture, God named the stars (Isa 40:26) and passed those names to Adam and his children. Through naming the stars, and the resulting groups of stars called constellations, God revealed Himself and His Plan before Moses and Israel came into existence. The movement of the stars through the seasons were designed to be a constant reminder of The God Who made all things (Rom 1:20).

The stars were placed by God into different constellations that were designed to picture His plan. They were never designed to mystically guide mankind as they are used by astrologers today, but were the initial calendars to guide a predominantly agricultural economy. The entire grouping of constellations is called the Zodiac, which comes from the Greek word ZOAD, meaning "The Way." Jesus was indeed "The Way" (John 14:6) which reasonably implies the message in the stars was about the Redeemer of all mankind. The Zodiac is mentioned in Job 38:32 by the Hebrew word MAZZAROTH, which is a plural word meaning "constellations." Most commentators view this as a reference to the ancient Zodiac.

There is evidence to indicate that God displayed His plan to people through the stars, with the explanations extending from generation to generation. What follows are some of the key principles that establish the evidence to be considered.

1. The Scriptural Basis to Look to the Design of the Heavens (Gen 1:14)

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs [The Hebrew²⁵ word 'OTH means a sign or a marker that points to something else, like the rainbow {Gen 9:12}, circumcision {Gen 17:11}, the plagues on Egypt {Exodus}, the Sabbath {Exo 31:13}, and the banner of the sons of Israel {Num 2:2}. In the New Testament the Greek word "SEMEION" is used for miracles and markers of prophetic events], and for seasons, and for days and years."

2. Creation Teaches God's Attributes (Rom 1:20)

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

²⁵ Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic are the three original languages of the Bible.

3. The Heavens Reveal God's Glory Through Design and Order (Psalm 19:1-6)

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. ² Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, ⁵ Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; it rejoices as a strong man to run his course. ⁶ Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them; and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

4. God Named the Stars and Constellations and Knows Their Exact Number. This Displays His Omniscience (Isa 40:26-27)

Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power not one of them is missing. ²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God'?

5. God Controls the Stars and Constellations Indicating His Omnipotence (Job 38:31-32; Isa 13:10)

Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? ³² Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth?" (Isa 13:10) "For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light.

6. God's Creation Speaks of a Powerful, Creative Designer and Ultimate Cause of All Things (Psa 146:6)
Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them.

7. The Same Twelve Major Signs (Constellations) Are Found in Every Nation. These Twelve Signs Relate to the "Seed of the Woman" (Gen 3:15) and His Relationship to History.

The fact that they all contain the same signs of the Zodiac is evidence of a common origin. Ancient Jewish tradition says that the information was passed from Adam to Enoch to Noah who brought it through the Flood. From the eight who survived the Flood the information was passed on to the next generations. At the dispersion from The Tower of Babel the information was taken to the rest of the world.

a. The twelve signs are the foundation for three sets of four signs:

- The Redeemer: Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius
- The Redeemed: Capricornus, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries
- The Redeemer: Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo

b. The first set of four signs represent the First Advent of Messiah (The Redeemer); the second set represents Believers of all time frames (The Redeemed); and the third set represents the Second Advent of Messiah (The Redeemer).

c. A brief summary of the meanings of the signs:²⁶

- Virgo (The Virgin) portrays the Virgin Birth of the Messiah.
- Libra (The Scales) portrays that Redemption is through the satisfaction of God's Justice.
- Scorpio (The Scorpion) portrays the Conflict that is fighting Redemption.
- Sagittarius (The Archer) portrays the Victor, The Fulfillment of Redemption.
- Capricornus (The Sea-Goat) portrays the person of Resurrection.
- Aquarius (The Water-Bearer) portrays the insured Blessings to the Believer.
- Pisces (The Fish) portrays the Blessings secured.
- Aries (The Lamb) portrays the Living Sacrifice of Redemption.
- Taurus (The Bull) portrays the Powerful Wrath of the Victor.
- Gemini (The Twins) portrays the Twofold Nature of His Coming.
- Cancer (The Crab) portrays the Messiah's Possessions Held Fast.
- Leo (The Lion) portrays Messiah's Consummated Triumph.

²⁶ Joseph A. Seiss, *The Gospel in the Stars*, Kregel, 1972
E.W. Bullinger, *The Witness of the Stars*, Kregel, 1967

8. The Signs Were Never Designed to Be Worshipped

They did not extend to making daily prophesies like they are being used today (Isa 47:8-15). This use is a distortion of their original meanings and intent. Satan, the spiritual adversary is a counterfeiter, so it is to be expected that he will seek to distort the original meaning of God through the establishment of a false viewpoint about the stars (2 Cor 11:13-15). He has done this through astrology and horoscopes which are distortions of the Truth.

9. Why Even Consider the Original Zodiac?

- To offer evidence against the view that Judaism and Christianity were simply a repetition of ancient myths, but instead stand on their own foundation
- To show the true origin of pagan mythologies as a distortion of God's original revelation
- To show how the Gospel has been preached and proclaimed to the whole earth
- To show the divine origin of the Scriptures which proclaim the very same message written by the hand of God in the stars
- To show that astrology is a satanic distortion of an original revelation from God
- To magnify Jesus Christ, Whom it reveals, above all others

There is a lot of opposition to this position today, some from within the Christian community. Those who oppose it assume that the more modern advocates of this viewpoint, Joseph Seiss (1823-1904 A.D.), E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913 A.D.) and the late Dr. D. James Kennedy (1930-2007 A.D.), were promoting "following the stars" today through astrological signs. None of these men ever suggested that anyone should have a "Christian horoscope." These men did massive research into more ancient writings to locate the evidence for the Gospel of God being portrayed in the original Zodiac. The Word of God invites us to find what the heavens are telling us (Psa 19:1-3), so it is important to consider the Truth of the ancient zodiac and reject the distortions in the world today.

E. At Times, God Spoke Directly to Specific Humans

Some comments are recorded that God literally spoke to Adam, Cain, and Noah before the Flood and then to many others after the Flood including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, and Moses. We do not know how much was said or how many times He spoke to them, but there was conversation with the Creator and His creation until the time He instructed Moses to write it down. He also spoke to specific humans, such as Samuel, David, and Solomon, after the Bible was being written.

Again, it makes sense that a perfect Creator would speak perfectly to His Creation.

F. The Creator's Written Plan from Moses to the Present

It appears that the Creator, having revealed the message displayed in the expanse of the heavens, saw the distortion by man into various interpretations that were not compatible with His revealed will. He then chose to inspire a written record. This record in part was apparently designed to clarify the distortions and to make a more permanent record of His desires for mankind.

We can conclude that in whatever manner He communicated to humanity we know that it would be perfect since He is a perfect Creator.

The question, "Would the Creator (Elohim) communicate with His creation or not?" has only two possible answers. Either He did or He didn't. The evidence shows that He did decide to give His creation a **Revelation** of Himself to communicate with His creation (see **God vs Matter Chart**).

At times, even Believers can become arrogant and think they are superior to God's personal revelation of His person and plan. Then they begin to analyze the world through their own observation. This attitude places one on the **Matter Line** of the chart. A change of mind (repentance) is needed to correct that thinking and return to the **God Line**.

The next chapter will look at the accuracy of revelation and its transmission to the present day.

For Personal Study:

- ✓ Describe the issues in God's revelation from Adam to Moses.
- ✓ Describe the Scriptural claims of God's revelation of Himself through the stars.
- ✓ Were the stars and constellations ever designed to be worshipped?
- ✓ Where did the major perversion of the message occur?

Chapter 4

What Did the Creator Communicate with His Creation?

What Did the Creator Communicate with His Creation?

Inspiration

(See Chart)

Many people question whether or not the Bible is fully and completely accurate. Usually people who have rejected the accuracy of the Bible have done so based on false information. If a Christian rejects the accuracy of the Scriptures, they have moved from the **God Line** on the chart to the **Matter Line** on the chart, using only human knowledge and perception to try to understand spiritual things. If the Bible's accuracy is questionable then how can personal salvation ever be assured or God's desires be lived? If Christians find themselves on the **Matter Line**, they need to learn or review some important facts, change their minds, and move back to the **God Line** so they can have confidence in what they study from God's Word.

One common attack on God and His Word is that the Bible uses itself to prove its points. This is called "circular reasoning" and is clearly not a valid means of determining truth. However, what is frequently overlooked is that reasonable people can look at people, places, things, and events outside the Bible and easily see facts that prove God exists and that His Word must be true. This is a defense of God and His Word from outside the structure and doctrine derived by The Church (those who believe in Christ from the Day of Pentecost until the Rapture; more later in our study).

Now that the reasonable certainty of the one God, Elohim, is established we will explore whether or not His Word has been established as inerrant (free from error) beyond any reasonable doubt.

A. The Question of Inspiration

1. The Bible Claims Divine Inspiration (2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 1:1)

Some critics have stated that the Bible does not claim to be inspired of God, but it clearly affirms its inspiration, both by direct statement and prophetic fulfillment in history. While many prophecies are yet to be fulfilled a sufficient number of them, especially concerning Messiah at the first advent, have been, therefore attesting to Divine Inspiration.

2. Inspiration Is Distinguished from Simple Human Interpretation (2 Pet 1:20-21)

The meaning of a passage is never ours to decide but ours to discover.

3. What the Bible Records Are Issues of Life and Death (John 3:36)

The Bible is not simply to read but instead it is like a telescope to look through that brings distant things near and things hard to see into focus. For example, in spite of the many issues of life, there are clear statements of what an individual must do to be saved eternally. It is simply to "believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31).

4. An Explanation of Inspiration

Simply stated, inspiration accepts the fact that God the Holy Spirit so directed the writers of Scripture that without changing their personality, vocabulary, frame of reference or emotional patterns, He revealed a complete and connected thought that was recorded in their own language without error in the original manuscripts, which are called "autographs."

Nelson's Bible Dictionary has a good summary of different terms associated with inspiration. They write:

Inspiration is a technical term for the Holy Spirit's supernatural guidance of those who received special revelation from God as they wrote the books of the Bible. The end result of this inspiration is that the Bible conveys the truths which God wanted His people to know and to communicate to the world.

Evangelical Christians agree that the primary purpose of the Bible is to lead people to a personal relationship with God as Savior. But everything taught by the Bible on any subject is helpful and instructive for the complete Christian life (2 Tim 3:16-17). Because Christianity does relate to the real world, the Bible's declarations about the earth and history are completely trustworthy.

Two terms often used in any discussion of the inspiration of the Bible are plenary and verbal. Plenary, a term meaning "full" or "complete," means that each book, chapter, and paragraph of the Bible is equally derived from God. Verbal inspiration emphasizes the truth that the wording of the text, as well as the ideas conveyed, is supernaturally inspired by God through the Holy Spirit.

Inerrancy is a term used along with plenary verbal inspiration to convey the view that the Bible's teaching is true on everything of which it speaks. The Bible is not just a useful body of human ideas. It makes clear the mind of God Himself.

Infallibility is a term often used as a synonym (another word with the same basic meaning) for inerrancy. However, the root meaning of infallibility is "not liable to fail in achieving its purpose." Truth, or inerrancy, is affirmed of the content of the Bible; infallibility refers to the effectiveness of the wording in conveying the reliable ideas, as well as the effectiveness of those ideas when used by the all-powerful Holy Spirit (Isa 55:11).

Important as Biblical infallibility is, it is not enough without inerrancy. The reason why the all-powerful Spirit can use Scripture so effectively is that He directed its production from the beginning so that all of it is God's reliable information.

Inspiration, then, is a statement about God's greatness. God is intelligent and able to communicate with man, whom He created in His image. God knows everything about all reality in creation and is absolutely faithful and true (Rev 3:7; 21:5). It follows that ideas communicated by divine revelation are true and conform to reality as God knows it. God overruled human limitations and sinful biases so that His spokesmen were able to write what He wanted written. God guided the thought conveyed so that it was without error, accomplishing the objectives He intended.²⁷

5. The Ramifications of Inspiration

The Scriptures are designed to be a revelation from God Himself, about Himself and His Plan which revolves around Jesus Christ (John 16:13-14). Knowing what is written is important; knowing the Author is the most important and is to be the objective of the true student. If He revealed Himself (and He did) then that which is inspired is totally inspired. This is called "plenary" inspiration.

The application for mankind is that everywhere Scripture touches, be it the unknown past, ancient history, science or moral issues, it is correct although it may not contain all the details of a particular topic.

6. How Did God Communicate with His Creation?

God at times dictated (Isa 6:8-10 et al.; which means "and others") but He also used dreams (Gen 15:12; 31:10-13) (Also please look up Num 12:6 et al.), visions (Isa 1:1; 6:1; 1 Kings 22:19) (Also please look up Acts 10 et al.), and angelic messengers (Deut 33:2; Gal 3:19) (Also please look up Psalms 68:17 et al.) to convey His message.

7. There Are Many External Proofs of Inspiration

There is a multitude of fulfilled prophecies that are not religious in scope, such as the rise of the Greek conqueror, Alexander the Great (Dan 2:19-7:1). Archaeological discoveries, such as Jericho, confirm the reality of people, places, and events. There are many more discoveries, but it is beyond the scope of this book to provide a detailed list. Another proof is the preservation of the text (Mark 13:31) even though it has been the most attacked book in history. More details about this attack will be given later in this book.

8. There Are Two Basic Views of Inspiration

- a. Some believe the Bible is not inspired or that it is simply one of many inspired works of humanity.** Some see it as simply a piece of literature. While it has a grammatical form expressed in several varieties, it is not simply words on pages. When a person does not recognize all of the Bible as Scripture, then the person is left to pick and choose the pieces that fit a preconceived idea or bias.

²⁷ *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986

Many people claim the Bible is inspired but then allegorize the writing to the point it is not recognizable. Allegory turns historical events into symbols (like saying the Flood of Noah is simply a discourse on the trials of life and it was not a literal global flood) or into applications that Scripture does not teach. This is a functional rejection of inspiration, which leads to functional atheism. The English playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616 A.D.) once said, "The devil can cite Scripture for his own purpose."²⁸ Allegorical interpretation probably arose when people lost their patience concerning the literal fulfillment of prophecies and began to seek a meaning other than the literal meaning.

Some people view the words of Scripture as magical. The promises are not incantations (special words used to seek the favor of a god) to be spoken as a mantra (words repetitively chanted seeking a connection with a god) but rather the words are guarantees made by the Author. It is not the words that have the power in themselves, but the One behind the words. Faith is strengthened when a person accepts the Author's intended meaning of the words He chose to inspire.

Rejection of the historical nature of the Scripture is usually the beginning of the rejection of Divine inspiration. The Bible is grounded in history, which becomes part of the basis for believing its supernatural promises. It claims to be a historical book, so if it is historically inaccurate then prophecies are meaningless, promises are doubtful, and even life itself is to be feared because there is no anchor for the soul (Heb 6:19).

Some people might receive insight, known as illumination, on a given passage that is a valid application of that passage because it is based on correct interpretation. Satan might then use this personal illumination to breed arrogance in the interpreter and then use the arrogance to permit allegory to enter the thought process.

How a person interprets the Scripture is the focus of a discipline called "hermeneutics," which will be discussed in an upcoming chapter. If an individual tries to study the Scripture without good study habits, a person will likely miss the objective of accurate interpretation. It is good to write in your Bible, but it is even better to let your Bible "write" on you.

b. Others believe the Bible is fully and completely inspired.

9. Much of the Following Section Is Taken from Josh McDowell's Extremely Informative Books, "Evidence That Demands a Verdict" and "The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict"²⁹

a. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, which means that He viewed the Scriptures as totally accurate (Matt 5:17-19).

If the Scriptures were not totally accurate, then Jesus was subscribing to error, which would not be compatible with His perfection.

Since the Scriptures are revealed by the Holy Spirit and attest to Jesus as the Messiah (John 16:5-15), the perfect Son (1 Pet 2:24-25) of the perfect God (Matt 5:48), for Him to agree with error (if the Scriptures are not inerrant) is to deny His perfection and to call the Holy Spirit a liar, which is blasphemy (John 16:13-14).

b. If the Bible is inspired of God then it is inerrant or else the character of God comes into question (Heb 6:18).

Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs (the document that was actually written by the author), properly interpreted, will be shown to be wholly true in everything the writers affirm, whether it has to do with doctrine, morality or the social, physical, and life sciences.

Inerrancy does not mean that various accounts by various witnesses have to be recorded with the same words in the same way. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are such an example. There were different witnesses with different perspectives but they managed to accurately record the events and expand our understanding of the details of the event.

Even when non-Biblical sources are quoted (like when Paul quoted a heathen poet on Mars Hill; Acts 17:28), the quotation is accurate, but it does not mean that all the writings of the non-Biblical writer or source is true.

²⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 1596-1599

²⁹ Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict-Historical Evidence for the Christian Faith*, Campus Crusade, 1972; Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict-Evidence I & II Fully Updated in One Volume to Answer the Questions Challenging Christians in the 21st Century*, Campus Crusade, 1999

Inerrancy is not defined in terms of strict grammatical rules, because writers from every culture in every time frame have always been allowed freedom of expression.

Some critics attack inerrancy on grounds that the Bible is not specific enough. That is like saying that something happened in 2010 but the account is not accurate because the month, date, and time are not mentioned. There does not have to be an exhaustive account of an event reported for it to be accurate. The battle of Genesis 14 is one such example. Enough details are given to teach the spiritual principles intended by the Author, although the exact date is not determinable.

The Bible is not designed to be a scientific journal that uses modern terminology to describe scientific events, but instead speaks to people where they are. For example, modern meteorologists (weather scientists) still use the terms "sunrise" and "sunset," while they know those terms are not scientifically accurate.

c. The Bible was inerrant when initially written.

There have admittedly been scribal errors in the transmission of the texts, but 95% of all existing writings are in complete agreement.

Some critics claim that the Bible does not teach its own inerrancy, only that it is inspired. The Bible affirms that Scripture is a revelation from God so if it is from God it is true and therefore would be inerrant. It is logical for the student to expect inerrancy because it follows from inspiration. Any claim contrary to that would believe that God was the cause of error which is blasphemy.

Others claim inerrancy is not important, but does God utter something other than truth? To believe that is to err (John 17:17).

A modern claim is that inspiration and inerrancy are recent inventions that originated with B.B. Warfield of Princeton University USA in the late 1800's. Others trace it to leaders in the Reformation (the period of history that began in 1517 when people began to reject Roman Catholicism and protest against its permissive view of immorality. The protestors became known as Protestants), yet even Augustine (354-430 A.D., an early theologian) held to inerrancy, as did Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D., a Catholic theologian).

Still others claim there are errors in the Bible, but they are referring to issues of the hand-written copies, not of the originals. Both copyists and translators make mistakes and no copy or translation is perfect in every regard. God, being God, had no problem correctly and accurately revealing what He wanted written down and preserved.

One particular attack claims that since the original manuscripts probably no longer exist, the transmitted message is not reliable. The argument against that claim is that the copies are at such a high level of agreement there is no major or minor Biblical doctrine compromised by any copyist (those who hand copied the previous manuscripts) mistakes. One might ask why didn't God preserve the original manuscripts? Maybe it was because He did not want man to worship the scrolls but rather the One that inspired them! Sadly, today some people worship translations rather than the One the translation reveals. This viewpoint is misguided.

What the Bible affirms is inerrant, but that does not necessarily mean that everything it records is a legitimate form of speech or conduct. For example, it records various sins people commit, like David with Bathsheba, but inerrancy does not mean the sin becomes acceptable moral behavior. Inspiration, however, claims the record of the event of the sin is true.

The main point of the inerrancy issue is that whatever the Bible affirms is true and without error. The real question for the student is whether or not the Word of God is worthy of confidence in all matters. Intellectual honesty would accept the Bible as worthy of confidence.

d. Total Inspiration and Inerrancy give us confidence in the Scriptures that speak of our great salvation (1 John 5:13).

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

Many people wonder where they will spend eternity. Their confusion will remain unless they accept that only in God's Word can people find the truth and be assured of their place in eternity.

- e. **The challenge of Inspiration is to learn the Word and teach it to others** (2 Tim 4:1-4; Acts 20:27-28; Matt 4:4; John 14:15).

Many people have Bibles that they never open or don't see as valuable to life. While the Bible may not give specific answers to every situation, it will teach principles to live by and therefore lead in our decisions. The Holy Spirit will be the ultimate guide as we seek to learn and apply God's inerrant Word (Rom 8:26).

- f. **Some tests of personal belief in inspiration:**

Every Believer should attempt to be honest with themselves about their view of the inspiration of Scripture because it is critical to the foundation of personal faith. In order to test your personal beliefs ask yourself the following questions and honestly answer them.

- Is the Bible the authoritative word in my life?
- Am I seeking the Author's intent or trying to justify my own thoughts?
- Do I regard the Bible as valuable for life or is it just another book?
- Do I try to change what I don't like?
- Do I try to omit the parts I don't like?
- Do I look for "interpretations" that fit my preconceived ideas?
- Do I try to reconcile science with Scripture or Scripture with science?
- Do I try to reconcile written history with Scripture or Scripture with written history?
- Do I try to evaluate moral issues based on culture or public opinion or based on Scripture?
- Is the Bible the daily guidebook for my life?
- Do I only read it in times of trouble?
- Do I think I understand all of it?

B. Methods of Recording the Scriptures

1. The Writing of the Scriptures

Many of the earliest manuscripts (manuscripts is abbreviated, "MSS") were done on papyrus (early sheets of paper). Papyrus needed a dry climate to survive. Manuscripts were also written on parchment made from animal skins including sheep, goats, antelope and others. Vellum, another material frequently used, was made of calf skin and often dyed purple. Writing on vellum was usually in gold or silver ink to be more easily seen.

Other items that were written on included ostraca (unglazed clay pottery made into tablets) that were engraved with sharp instruments then dried, and wax tablets (flat wood covered with wax) that were marked with a piece of metal called a "stylus."

2. The Forms of Ancient Books

Ancient bookmakers glued papyrus together and then wound them around a stick. These were called "rolls" or "scrolls." The size of the scroll was limited by the difficulty in using the roll. It was usually written on only one side. Two-sided scrolls were called "Opisthographic" (Rev 5:1). Some scrolls were 144 feet long (about 44 meters), but most were 20-35 feet (6-10 meters).

Later, papyrus sheets were assembled with writing on both sides. This was the codex (manuscript text in book form). J. Harold Greenlee, a noted scholar whose lifework has been to identify the original text in a course of study called "textual criticism," says that Christianity was the prime reason for the development of the codex-book form. Classical authors wrote on papyrus scrolls until about the 3rd century A.D.

3. Types of Writing

Some manuscripts were all in upper case Greek letters with no word divisions or punctuation and usually written on vellum or parchment. This writing is called "uncial."

Around the 10th century A.D. cursive writing with small letters was introduced and the resultant works were called "miniscules." This was used primarily for the production of books. Bruce Metzger, a renowned textual analyst, writes about the difficulty of a continuous text, "It must not be thought, however, that such ambiguities [difficult things to understand] occur very often in Greek. In that language it is the rule, with very

few exceptions, that native Greek words can end only in a vowel or in one of three consonants (Nu, Rho, Sigma)..., thus there was no problem for the normal Greek reader.”³⁰ It was how they learned to read from the start. The Hebrew and Aramaic language are similar, so that anyone who was taught classical Hebrew or Greek would be able to identify the individual words.³¹

4. Chapters

The first chapter divisions were inserted in the continuous text in 586 B.C. when the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) was divided into 154 groupings (called the Sedarim). In 536 B.C. it was further sectioned into 54 divisions and then into 669 smaller segments to assist in locating references. Synagogues used these divisions to establish a one-year reading cycle.

The Greeks made divisions around 250 A.D. The oldest system of chapter divisions is about 350 A.D. in the margins of Codex Vaticanus, a scroll kept in the Vatican. In the 13th century, Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris and later Archbishop of Canterbury, divided the Bible into the modern chapter divisions (c. 1226 A.D.).

Verse divisions were not universally used in a systematic way when they were first developed. The first standard verse divisions were around 900 A.D. The Latin Vulgate (the Latin translation of the Bible) was the first to incorporate verse and chapter divisions into both the Old and New Testaments.

C. The Question of Canonicity³²

How was it determined what books would be in the Canon? There were a series of tests that were applied to each separate book of the Bible to see if it was part of the inspired Word of God. These tests were applied to both the Old and New Testaments. It is well known that by 400 B.C. the Old Testament was completed and confirmed by the prophets and the leaders. The New Testament was confirmed as completed in 96 A.D. Once we have confidence that the Canon of Scripture is reliable we then know it may be searched for Truth.

1. Tests of a Book for Inclusion in the Canon

- Is it authoritative? Does it make the claim, “Thus says the Lord!”
- Is it prophetic? Was it written by a man of God?
- Was it also authenticated by the prophets?
- Is it authentic? The ancient church fathers’ motto was “If in doubt, throw it out.”
- Is it dynamic? Did it come with the life-transforming power of God?
- Was it received, collected, read, preserved, and used?
- How did the people of God view it? Note that Peter acknowledged Paul (2 Pet 3:16).
- Did the writers know they were writing Scripture (Deut 31:24-26; Josh 1:8; Jdg 3:4; Jer 36; Neh 8:1-8; Dan 9:2,5,6; Zech 7:12; 2 Pet 1:21)?
- Was there official public action that openly proclaimed the writing’s determination as Scripture?
- Was there ever an assembly of Believers who acknowledged it?

2. The Church Did Not Give Authority to the Canonical Books, but Rather Recognized the Authority the Books Already Possessed

Jesus Christ Himself affirmed the Old Testament Canon. He said,

For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,'⁵⁰ in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'
(Luke 11:49-51)

³⁰ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 1968

³¹ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, 1972

³² See Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 1972 and *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 1999

The blood of Zechariah is the last Old Testament prophet named who was martyred and the blood of Abel refers the reader to Genesis. Another reference is: *"Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled'"* (Luke 24:44)."

Bible.org states the issue well saying, "Their canonicity was inherent within them, since they came from God. People and councils only recognized and acknowledged what is true because of the intrinsic inspiration of the books as they were written. No Bible book became canonical by action of some church council."³³

Some say the Canon of Scripture is one of many other inspired books. This viewpoint comes from either a rejection of or misunderstanding of both the internal and external evidence for the recognition of the books that comprise the Bible. Sadly, many people throughout the course of human history have been taught differently and accepted those errors without question and investigation.

Josephus (37-100 A.D.), an unbelieving Jew and Roman citizen, said the Old Testament Canon was recognized and completed in 424 B.C. Apion, (30 B.C.-48 A.D.) an Egyptian philosopher who hated the Jews, wrote a book saying all religion was mythological, especially Jewish religion. Josephus wrote "Contra-Apion" around 94 A.D. to argue that there was never a time when the Jews doubted their Scripture.

The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The translation was done in Alexandria and placed in the library there, called Museion, around 280 B.C. These same translators rejected the Apocrypha as canonical. The Apocrypha are historical writings that contained some historical errors, and therefore were left out of the Bible .

The Talmud refers to a group of scholarly articles written by Jewish theologians from 400 B.C.-500 A.D. They disagreed on many things but not on the canon. These Jews believed that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and Job; Joshua wrote Deut 34:5-12 and the Book of Joshua; Samuel wrote Samuel, Judges, and Ruth; David wrote part of Psalms and part of Proverbs; Jeremiah wrote Kings, Jeremiah, and Lamentations; Hezekiah and his school wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes; Ezra's Great Synagogue scribes were believed to have written Ezekiel, the minor prophets, Daniel, and Esther; and Ezra wrote Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. The value in seeing what they believed, although many disagree with some of their conclusions, is that the canonicity was not in question even though the authorship was still being discussed.

3. The Early Church Had the Supernatural Ability to Spiritually Analyze the Validity and Accuracy of the Writings Through the Gifts of Prophecy and Discerning of Spirits, Given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 14:32)

This proposition is stated as a universal principle that crosses all time frames (dispensations), so it was applicable in the Old Testament as well as the New. No Old Testament prophet contradicted another Old Testament prophet. No New Testament prophet challenged or corrected an Old Testament prophet. Since this principle crosses dispensations, then any non-canonical or non-inspired book included in the Old Testament would have been exposed by the early church. Eusebius, the father of church history, accepted all but Esther (because the name of God is not mentioned). Only Tertullian (another Church father) agreed with him on this issue. Later, Esther was found to contain God's Name embedded at the beginning of major sections of the text and its canonicity no longer questioned.

4. No Book of Scripture Was Initially Rejected by the Church and Later Accepted into the Canon

Another recent attack challenges the Bible through the books omitted from it, namely, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (false writings). For example, a movie on The History Channel titled *"Banned from the Bible"* claimed, based on an alleged quote from Josephus' "Antiquities of the Jews" (Book 8, Sec 44), that the "Testament of Solomon" should be in the Canon. But the alleged quote does not exist in that book and is a fabrication, not a fact. Many enemies of verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture have no problem employing lies in their arguments.

5. The Church Fathers (Also Called Patristic Fathers) Rejected Many Works as Scripture

The "things confessed" was called the "Homologoumena." It refers to the books that were readily accepted as canonical.

³³ <https://www.bible.org/seriespage/7-bible-holy-canon-scripture>, June 19, 2020

The “things spoken against” was called the “Antilogoumena.” They referred to the books that were not readily received and included Esther (because God’s name was not mentioned), Song of Solomon (too much sex), Ecclesiastes (too much human viewpoint), Ezekiel 40–48 (they couldn’t reconcile the Levitical and Millennial priesthood); and Proverbs (they did not understand Hebrew poetry and thus saw contradictions).

The lying (false) writings were called the “Pseudepigrapha.” They were clearly not inspired and thus never accepted. These were like the false writings referred to in 1 Timothy 3:8 and included “The Penitence of Janus and Jambres,” “The Magic Book of Moses,” and the “Book of Enoch.” The Book of Enoch, presumably written before the Flood, refers to the tribe of Dan, one of the sons of Jacob who was born centuries after the Flood.

The “writings apart from” was called the “Apocrypha.” These were written after the Canon was closed (424 B.C.). There were a total of 14 books that were not found in the Septuagint (abbreviated by “LXX” meaning “The Seventy” which refers to the 70 translators who worked on the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) or the Vulgate (Latin translation of the Scriptures) but later added into the Church Father Jerome’s (347-420 A.D.), Latin translation. All were written in Greek except: Ecclesiasticus, 1 Maccabees, part of Baruch, Judith, and Tobit which were in Aramaic. They cover a period of 400 years and are considered valuable to secular history, but not completely accurate, especially in some historical matters, so they are not inspired of God.

6. Scripture Was Attested to by the Writings of the Early Church Fathers

Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) quoted the New Testament 330 times; Irenaeus (c. 120-200 A.D.) 1,819 times; Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) 2,406 times; Origen (185-254 A.D.) 17,992 times; Tertullian (160-225 A.D.) 7,258 times; Hippolytus (170-235 A.D.) 1,378 times; and, Eusebius (c. 265-340 A.D.) 5,176 times. This is a total of 36,289 quotations by the early church fathers. An important fact is that they quote all but eleven verses of the New Testament, prior to the convening of any church Councils. Again, The Church did not give authority to the books included in the canon but recognized the authority they already possessed!

7. The Scripture Writings Are Unique

The Scriptures were written over a period of 1500 years, by over 40 authors spanning over 40 generations. The writers were peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, Egyptian-trained, herdsman, generals, cupbearers, prime ministers, doctors, kings, rabbis, and tax collectors.

The Scriptures were written from different places including: the wilderness, in a dungeon, in a palace and on a hillside, inside a prison, on the road, on an island in exile, and in a military campaign.

They were written in times of war and times of peace, written by some authors in the heights of joy and others in the depths of despair.

They were written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe; in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

They concern hundreds of controversial subjects with one unfolding story of God’s Redemption of man. The “Paradise Lost” of Genesis becomes the “Paradise Regained” of the Book of Revelation.

It is written in various literary types including history, law (civil, criminal, ethical, ritual, sanitary), religious poetry, topical teaching, parables, biography, personal correspondence, personal memoirs, and diaries even extending to prophetic literature.

Attributed to a noted biblical scholar, F.F. Bruce (1910-1990 A.D.) is the comment, “Any part of the human body can only be properly explained in reference to the entire body, thus any part of the Bible can only be properly explained in reference to the whole Bible.”³⁴

The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book in history. There have been more copies produced of its entirety and more portions and selections than any other book in history. No other book has even come close. The Bible was one of the first major books ever translated

³⁴ <https://www.quoteency.com/quote/1590531/F-F-Bruce-Any-part-of-the-human-body-can-only-be-explained-in-reference-to-the-whole-body>, July 2, 2020

when the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek in the Septuagint. As of October 2019 the full Bible has been translated into 698 languages, the New Testament has been translated into an additional 1,548 languages and Bible portions or stories into 1,138 other languages.³⁵

There is more manuscript evidence for the Bible than any ten pieces of classical literature combined. The texts of William Shakespeare (1564-1616 A.D.), which are more recent, are more corrupt than the texts of the Scriptures and only a few of his early manuscripts exist.

In 303 A.D., Diocletian, a Roman emperor who ruled from 284-305 A.D., issued an edict to destroy the Christian Scriptures. They burned churches to the ground, persecuted any Christian worship and burned all the Scriptures they could find. To burn the Scriptures they had to know what the Scriptures consisted of, so in a way they confirmed the Biblical books. A mere 50 years later the Roman Emperor Constantine ordered 50 copies of the Scriptures to be made at government expense.

The Bible has also survived numerous attempts by its enemies to completely destroy it. Voltaire, who died in 1778 A.D., was well known for verbal attacks on the Roman Catholic Church. He said the Bible would be swept from history in 100 years. Fifty years later the Geneva Bible Society used Voltaire's printing press to produce Bibles.

The Bible has also survived the critics. Noted theologian Bernard Ramm (1916-1992 A.D.) writes, "No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified."³⁶ Included in this attack is the Documentary Hypothesis group (those who hold to the JEDP theory) who attacked it because they assumed that such writing did not exist at the time of Moses so it had to be of later authorship. The core belief of the JEDP is that Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible, but that those books were actually written by different authors over a span of 500 years beginning 450 years after Moses' death. That has been disproven many times over, yet many schools, even theological ones, still teach it as fact.

The Bible prophecies have been accurate. Jewish history is recorded more accurately than in any other culture, even recording the historical failures of the nation. The records of the various leading Biblical personalities include their failures and sins, with the writers even including their own sins. Noted theologian and founder of Dallas Theological Seminary USA, Lewis S. Chafer (1871-1952 A.D.) says "The Bible is not such a book a man would write if he could, or could write if he would."³⁷

The Bible's influence on surrounding literature is unparalleled in the history of the world. If you could destroy every Bible, it could be reconstructed from other writings that quote it, either for good or bad. There have been more books written about the Bible than any other work in all history.

An interesting observation concerning both inspiration and canonicity is that those who try to discredit the Scriptures must consider them "inspired" enough to attack the literal interpretation using false worldviews to call those who believe the Bible uninformed. In a way, the time spent attacking it confirms its validity.

The question, "What did the Creator (Elohim) communicate with His creation?" is found recorded in the book known as The Bible.

Note that since Elohim's revelation is infallible, it is Truth and therefore to be learned as the foundation of our understanding of how the world is designed to function and our place in it.

³⁵ https://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_translations, July 2, 2020

³⁶ https://www.calvaryroadbaptist.org/sermons/0005/sermon-the_uniqueness_of_the_bible.htm, July 2, 2019

³⁷ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 1, Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1947-48, p 22

For Personal Study:

- ✓ Define, “plenary inspiration.”
- ✓ Is the Bible to be literally understood? Why or why not?
- ✓ Why is it essential to believe the Bible to be totally accurate?
- ✓ Discuss why the tests for inclusion of a writing into the Canon were good and reasonable.
- ✓ Did men choose what would be their Bible or did they simply recognize what God had revealed to be the Bible? Discuss.
- ✓ Discuss the roles that the gifts of Prophecy and Discerning of Spirits played while the early Church recognized the inspired books.
- ✓ Describe the uniqueness of the Christian Bible in the history of literature.

Chapter 5

How Should the Revelation Be Read?

How Should the Revelation Be Read?

Please refresh your memory of the **God vs Matter Chart**. The deeper analysis of **God, Revelation, and Inspiration** is completed. Now we are beginning the section titled **Author's Will**. Since the **Revelation** comes from the Creator of the universe and all therein, it must be approached with **Humility**. To do otherwise is **Self-Will** which is a manifestation of **Arrogance**.

After accepting that God spoke clearly and accurately to His creation, it is reasonable to ask "how should what He spoke be understood?" Did He communicate in language that was difficult to understand or in language that would be simple enough for a growing child? Those who raise children understand that communication to them must be simple and literal, only introducing figures of speech as they grow up and can understand them. If you want your child to remove the trash from your home you would not use terminology that would confuse your intent, but rather language that was clear and concise. The Lord wants people to come to Him with the faith of a child (Luke 18:16-17) so it is reasonable that He would communicate literally because that is how children understand. Figures of speech would be introduced as the child is able to understand them, but they still have a literal meaning. For example, **"the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29) is a figure of speech that communicates a very important literal truth, that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

When a person believes that the Bible is an allegory (an expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence),³⁸ their thinking has moved to the **Matter Line of Self-Will** for they can read into the Scriptures anything they desire. That type of reasoning is based on **Arrogance** where one thinks they know more than the Creator who revealed Himself. When a person stops trying to understand the Bible literally, they need to change their mind and return to seeking the **Author's Will** rather than **Self-Will**. When this repentance occurs, they have actually started again on the **God Line** of the chart, having humbled themselves to seek His will, whether consciously or unconsciously making this decision.

A. There Are Only Two Ways to Interpret the Bible (Literal and Non-Literal)

The "Literal Method" of interpretation recognizes figures of speech, poetic language, types, and symbols. It believes that with a literal reading, understanding and fulfillment is the Author's intent unless the Author through the Scripture itself leads to the use of figurative language. This belief recognizes the authority of the Author of Scripture to reveal Himself.

A serious student of the Word honors the Word by comparing Scripture with Scripture, and letting the Holy Spirit lead into all Truth. The student of the literal Word believes that God "says what He means and means what He says." Only the student of the literal Word of God can honestly proclaim the absolute statements that it contains. The Reformation in Europe in the 1500's A.D. began the return to the Historical (part of history)-Grammatical (the importance of study from the original languages)-Literal interpretation (staying with the plain meaning) of Scripture. Sadly, although it began this way, the Reformation reverted back to the allegorical interpretations of Roman Catholicism. The Puritans who were part of the Reformation in England and tried to "purify" The Church from Roman Catholic practices, promoted the Historical-Grammatical-Literal method of interpretation.

A "Non-Literal Method" is anything that reads foreign meanings into the literal understanding of the Word. This imported reading is an allegorical or mythical interpretation, which the Scriptures prohibit (1 Tim 1:3-4; 2 Tim 4:3-4). The modern-day Reformation movement is a radical departure from the literal method into an extremely mystical view of Scripture, paying little or no attention to the history, original language or the contextual nature of the Bible.

During the time between the close of the Old Testament and beginning of the New Testament, Jewish theologians developed an allegorical method of interpretation that tried to reconcile the allegory of the Greek schools of philosophy with the Old Testament Scriptures. They were led by Aristobulus of Alexandria (c. 160 B.C.) and Philo (20 B.C.-54 A.D.). The Jewish Allegorists developed "Canons" (a regulation or standard) for allegorical interpretation that told them when they were to interpret in a non-literal manner. If they found a statement they deemed "unworthy" of God, or statements that either seemed to contradict or in any way presented a difficulty with traditional thought, they felt free to interpret allegorically. For example, if the world did not believe the flood of Noah was universal, they could read the worldly meaning into the Scripture. Also, if the record itself was allegorical in nature or they ran into unusual grammatical constructions or symbols they turned

³⁸ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/allegory>, July 15, 2018

to allegory attempting to explain the passage. Some of The Church fathers, like Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 A.D.) added a “mystical” method of interpretation to try to understand various passages and Augustine stated that all Scripture had a double meaning.³⁹ The allegorical method was fully adopted by Roman Catholicism which believed that the literal and historical interpretation of the Bible was the foundation for study, but that the “spiritual” or “mystical” meaning, beyond the literal, is what we should really seek. They followed the “Principle of Implication” which is called by the Greek word “EPIGENESIS” meaning that doctrines grow, develop, and change.⁴⁰ Unknowingly they were applying evolutionary theory to the Word of God. While we can clearly grow in our understanding of various passages, theology expressed in true doctrine does not change.

It is probable that the allegorical method of interpretation helped blind the Jews to their Messiah because they could not see how He could be both God and man at the same time, or die for sins and rise again. It is also probable that much of the confusion in The Church today can also be attributed to allegorical interpretation because allegory establishes one person’s interpretation as being as valid as the next without seeking to find out what God wants us to know.

Some Basic Principles of Interpretation⁴¹

Below are some simple statements of principles that should guide interpretation. Those who attack Christian interpretation of God’s Word often use arguments that do not stand the smallest examination of the facts.

- The unexplained [by the Bible] is not necessarily unexplainable.
- Fallible interpretations [made by man] do not mean fallible revelation [made by God].
- Passages need to be understood in their context [what is stated both before and after the verses].
- Interpret difficult passages in the light of the clear ones [let the clear passage be the guide].
- Don’t focus teaching on obscure passages [those that are not clear].
- The Bible is a human book with human characteristics [written by man], but is infallibly inspired [by God].
- Because a report is incomplete [does not include all the facts] does not mean it is false.
- New Testament citations of the Old Testament need not always be exact [They are translations from one language to another and some words have no exact equivalent in other languages].
- The Bible does not necessarily approve of all it records [such as sins committed].
- The Bible frequently uses non-technical common language [figures of speech that are common to the speakers and hearers].
- The Bible may use round numbers as well as exact numbers [It is common in all speech to round off numbers, like instead of recording 185,964, it might simply say 186,000].
- Recognize different literary methods of writing, such as poetry [History, like the first five books of the Bible, is often written in a different format than poetry. Poetry uses more figures of speech].
- An error in a copy does not equate to an error in the original [Copies were hand made for centuries since they had no machine to exactly duplicate documents].
- General statements do not necessarily mean universal promises [Attention must be paid to who is receiving the promise. The promise to David to sit on the throne forever does not mean it is a promise to anyone else].
- Later revelation provides more details of previous revelation [This is called “progressive revelation” which will be discussed later].

B. Problems With the Non-Literal Method

The non-literal approach toward God’s Word is easily used to seek justification (proof of being right) for a predetermined idea. This lets the reader be a “god” and “write” his own standards rather than seeking to determine what the Divine Author wanted the reader to know. This approach is a manifestation of arrogance and a practical denial of inspiration, which leads inevitably to moral relativism (standards of morality that adjust based on circumstances of life), because words, verses, chapters or even entire books can be omitted or redefined, and new ones introduced based on the desire of the student.

³⁹ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3rd Revised Edition, 1970, pp 23-92

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Josh McDowell: *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, 1999, p 47

To the non-literal student the context of a particular verse is not important because the “student” claims the authority to reinterpret words according to personal desires. Some have claimed the leading of the Holy Spirit in this, yet it is simply a leading by personal feelings rather than by the Spirit of God.

This non-literal approach fails to honestly analyze the text in an organized way. It presumes that self-discipline is not needed in the study of the Word. An outgrowth of this method is that no importance is given to the original languages of Scripture since the reader’s viewpoint is more relevant to the interpretation than the author’s intent. One person once claimed to have received a revelation of the difference between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost. When shown that the Hebrew word RUACH was translated both “spirit” and “ghost,” and that the Greek word PNEUMA was also translated both “spirit” and “ghost” depending on who the translator was, they replied that they didn’t care what those languages said but believe what they claim to have been “told.” They were not told that by the Author of Scripture.

Evidence exists that Satan himself is the leader of the non-literal method of interpretation.⁴² A clear example is when Satan used what the woman added to God’s command (not to touch the fruit) to propose the non-literal interpretation that she wouldn’t “die” (Gen 3:1-7). God constantly tells us to “pay careful attention to His Word, in order to live it (Heb 8:5).

Some results of this non-literal approach are: a denial of the sin nature in regenerate man (please also look up Rom 6-7); no more sin in the life of the Believer; no divine solution to the sin problem; no more relevance of national Israel; no moral issues; no hell; no Savior; no cross; and even no resurrection. Simply put, everything the Bible affirms can be allegorized then disregarded. This practice is a clear example of holding to a **“form of godliness that denies the power thereof.”** This particular sin is an indicator of the last days (2 Tim 3:1-5).

When people lose their desire to fully know the Author (as Paul wanted, cf. Php 3:10) or become enslaved to the world, there is more and more interest in **“getting their ears tickled,”** through worldly parables, stories, and formulas (2 Tim 4:3-4).

Many people today have used the “story-telling” method to teach Bible truths. This is valuable in certain cultures where literacy is not common. For those well trained in what the Bible says, as the first generation of “story-tellers,” they can have some good, edifying, and informative results. Their proclamations may be very good, but how does one know when the distortion and then the mistake enters the conversation without the consistent study of the written Word? The generation that hears only the stories without the theological foundation, will unknowingly in the next generation get farther and farther from the Truth. Many critics of the Scriptures have charged that the events recorded in the Bible only have a small portion of truth in them and that the stories have been expanded through oral communication and are not reliable as facts. They raise a valid question about transmission of information under normal circumstances without a Divine hand involved. Inspiration guarantees that what was written by Moses was historically accurate. Inspiration into written languages also brings with it the command to study what is written.

This departure from the truth happened in Roman Catholicism when papal authority claimed infallible interpretation for themselves and thus promoted the Allegorical Method of Interpretation. The Lord Himself taught the importance of hermeneutics when He spoke in parables to the masses, but then taught the disciples how to literally understand the Scriptures. His literal death, burial, and resurrection is a clear example of the importance of the literal understanding and confident expectations (also known as “hope”) of the Word.

Non-Literal interpretation is nothing more than an unbalanced spiritual diet that is not good for the soul. It is all “milk” with no meat to chew on (Heb 5:12-14). When people will not make the effort to study God’s revelation of Himself through His Word, the local church simply becomes another form of entertainment instead of a place where the saints in the Body are truly edified by eating solid Scriptural food. When this happens, The Church ceases to be disciple makers because disciples are students of God’s Word. Many of today’s churches need to return to the “solid food.”

The current system of allegorical interpretation began in Germany in the 1800’s and gained a second push in some of the Pentecostal movements which believed the gift of prophecy returned and began to issue statements that did not agree with the Scripture. Some groups have even written into their doctrinal statements that they do

⁴² The allegorical method of interpretation neutralizes the contents of the Bible by spiritualizing everything. It was an ingenious way of getting ready-made doctrinal results.

not need to study the Bible, but just pray to the Holy Spirit to receive their own inspiration. This viewpoint was taken from a misunderstanding of 1 John 2:26-27 which says, ***“These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.”*** ***And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.***” The correct interpretation of those verses considers the context, already established throughout the New Testament, of the importance of teaching. The point is that one needs to study the Word of God and rely on the Holy Spirit as the primary teacher of spiritual truth. In context, John has pointed out that false teachers have denied everything about Jesus and are actually “antichrists,” meaning they are “against the teachings of Christ.” They have already been taught the truth, so they are to use it.

Out of this non-literal approach came several new “theologies:”

- Dominion Theology. It reinterprets Gen 1:26⁴³ from man ruling the animal kingdom to ruling over all the societies of the world. God is the ruler over all societies of the world, not man.
- Replacement Theology. This view holds that The Church replaced Israel and that all the promises to Israel now apply to The Church.
- Reconstructionism. A theology that arose out of conservative theology in the early 1970's. Followers believe *“that every area dominated by sin must be 'reconstructed' in terms of the Bible.”* They work hard to put God's law back into the laws of the land, which is not bad in itself, but will not build the real “Kingdom of God.” The real Kingdom is established by Christ, not man.
- Prosperity Theology. This materialism gospel promises material wealth for all who are spiritual. Real prosperity is spiritual in nature.
- Postmodernism. This is a relativistic (where permanent absolutes do not exist) theology that by its own admission and profession lacks any systematic understanding of the Word. It criticizes those who seek a systematic understanding, but the Scriptures themselves tell us this is important (Prov 1:2-7).

C. Four Foundational Rules of Interpretation⁴⁴ (Hermeneutics)

The correct interpretation of God's Word is a lifelong pursuit. There is no formula where one would be able to open the Bible and in a few minutes be able to understand what every passage means. The student should not become so frustrated that the search for the truth ends. God intentionally placed some difficult things in His Word, so that disciples would have to rely on the Holy Spirit for understanding (1 Cor 2:10-16). While some passages may be easy to understand, others will not be understood this side of eternity (1 Cor 13:12).

If the interpretation of God's Word could be done by a formula, then an unbeliever or even a computer could interpret all of God's Word. God desires His followers to seek Him and study His Word as part of our process of spiritual growth (2 Tim 2:15). Use these rules and principles as important guidelines while relying on the Holy Spirit who is the One who will lead you into all truth (John 16:13).

Below is a quick review of the basic principles of interpretation from the book *Vital Elements: Exploring the Truth*. Please see it for a more detailed explanation of each rule.

1. Rule One: Seek to Acquire Facts About God and Christ Jesus by Searching all of Scripture

This rule recognizes the basic characteristics of God's essence, also known as His attributes, as vitally important to correct interpretation. His essence is never compromised, nor inconsistent with itself. This rule is based on the fact that the more we know and fully appreciate the awesome nature of God (Php 3:10), the more skilled we will be in understanding what He has to say.

The fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all possess the same essence is Biblical proof of the Trinity. The term “Trinity” refers to the fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three manifestations of one God. They have basically three roles. The Father is the Planner (Acts 2:22-23), the Son is the Agent (John 5:36) and the Holy Spirit is the Revealer (John 16:13). While we may study their different roles, we must not seek to divide the Trinity. There is only One God (Deut 6:4); since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all share the characteristics that only God can possess, they are all God, and are One.

⁴³ **Gen 1:26** Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

⁴⁴ Drue Freeman, *Foundations: Building in the Faith*, Village Ministries International, 2001

2. Rule Two: Seek to Understand the Facts by Using the Clear Passage as Your Guide

This rule teaches us to look for the Scriptures that are easiest to understand and let those passages guide our understanding of Scriptures that are not as clear.

Included in this rule is the realization of progressive revelation, or how God expands the disclosure of His plan throughout history. To see how His plan unfolds we must interpret literally, considering the specifics or details and study the primary passages on a given topic. We will recognize that human volition exists and how to factor that into our interpretation as well as seeing the role that covenants play in interpretation.

3. Rule Three: Seek to be Wise by Comparing Scripture with Scripture

The third rule is to seek the wisdom that comes from the correct understanding and application of God's Word. We must realize and accept by faith that there is no confusion with God (1 Cor 14:33), so any lack of understanding comes from us. God placed figures of speech and riddles in the Bible to teach us wisdom (Prov 1:2-6).

Most disagreements in interpretation come from failure to properly compare Scripture with Scripture and let it interpret itself. An interpreter might overlook a passage or fail to consider how one passage he is aware of relates to another. It is wise for those who seek to know God's Word to pay attention to their own personal humility. Those who miss or do not consider one verse or one word will find that significant differences are made in one's understanding of Scripture.

This rule considers the differences that God establishes in His Word. We do that by considering the context. Comparative interpretation seeks the Divinely established harmony of Scripture, considering the dispensation that the verses refer to and the care one must take with prophetic passages.

4. Rule Four: Seek to Live the Christian Life by Properly Applying God's Word

This rule comes from a direct statement of Jesus Christ found in John 7:17-18. If we truly want to "know" God's Word, then we must be willing to "do" His Word. This principle encompasses the necessity of intellectual honesty in the study of God's Word. We must seek to set aside our bias and our preconceived ideas and honestly seek illumination from the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14). Applying this principle involves personal soul searching, for example, to evaluate the purity of our motives (2 Cor 13:5).

It is easy for us to hold personal prejudice, or form unwarranted opinions, and then go searching for a Biblical "proof" of them. However, by using that approach we can "prove" almost anything, because it makes us blind to passages that could lead in other directions, or to passages that urge us to seek balance.

For example, one might look at King David's actions concerning Bathsheba, the wife of one of his most loyal warriors (2 Sam 11). Some people might try to use that passage to prove that it is acceptable for a person in power to commit murder and adultery. One simply needs to read the next chapter and compare it with the "Ten Commandments" (Exo 20:1-17) to determine that murder and adultery are not acceptable to God. David remained king because of God's grace displayed toward David's repentance (Psa 51), but it was also clear that God did not condone David's sinful actions.

For Personal Study:

- ✓ Discuss the four rules of interpretation.
- ✓ Do you disagree with any of them? If so, why?

Chapter 6

Exploring the Truth: Assurance of Salvation

Exploring the Truth: Assurance of Salvation

What Assurances Did He Give About Eternity? (What Confidence Should I Have?)

(See Chart)

Having reasonably answered in previous chapters whether or not the Creator would communicate with His creation, the accuracy of His communication and how people should seek to understand it, this chapter will consider answers to the most important questions of life and eternity. Can we know with certainty where we will spend eternity?

Every human knows there is a life beyond this one (Eccl 3:11) and that they have missed the mark, or sinned (Rom 2:14-16), thus all are sinners facing eternity. All the world religions, except Atheism, believe that one must work to overcome the problem of sin, namely find a way to save themselves. Only Christianity says that a person cannot save themselves, but needs a Savior, for salvation is not of works but of grace (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). It is necessary to explore not just the problems of sin and its eternal consequences, but the solution (Rom 6:23).

If a person has taken the step of faith that **God** has perfectly revealed (**Revelation**) Himself to His creation through His inspired (**Inspiration**) Word, then we can have confidence in the revelation, with the result that we seek His (**Author's**) **Will**, for the result will be **Truth** (John 8:31-32) that is assured (**Assurance**). If a person begins their spiritual journey believing that **Matter** has always existed and then follows in the steps of **Observation**, **Perception**, and **Self-Will** the result will be **Deception**. This deception is often manifested in **Anger**, **Fear**, and **Guilt**. If Believers find themselves following the **Matter Line** of thinking they need to change their mind and return to the pursuit of the **Author's Will** for their lives. This recognizes that the Creator perfectly revealed Himself in such a way as to be literally understood so it is possible to live a life pleasing to Him (2 Cor 5:7-10).

Let us now explore some of the most basic of God's revelations about Himself, that may provide us with His **Truth** and grant **Assurance** in this life and the one to come (1 Tim 4:7-8).

A. The Nature of Grace

In order for anyone to "know" with certainty whether or not they are assured of their eternal salvation, they must first realize the nature and extent of grace. By definition, grace is the unearned and undeserved favor of God. Therefore, grace depends on who and what God is, not who and what man is (Exo 34:6).

God has displayed grace throughout history because His Plan included the need to satisfy His Righteousness and Justice that was accomplished by Christ on the cross when He made the required payment for sins (1 John 2:1-2).

When a person receives grace at salvation, God is due all the credit. If man could work for salvation, then man would be due credit (Eph 2:8-9).

At the point of salvation, our new birth, we enter into God's plan of grace as newborn babies and then are called to grow up unto Christ (1 Pet 2:1-3).

God's grace is an integral part of "The Truth" which is exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ and is designed to set a person free not only eternally but temporally (in time), from the entanglements of sin (John 8:31-32).

The enemies of grace like to add non-Biblical laws, called legalisms, to try to enslave others to themselves and build personal power (Gal 5:1).

Our freedom from the penalty for sin and the means to battle the power of sin is graciously given to Believers to serve others in love (Gal 5:13).

B. The Gospel of Grace for Salvation

Although there may appear to be many ways of salvation, there are only two possibilities. A person must either receive grace for salvation or work for salvation. The Bible is very clear concerning the correct choice (Eph 2:8-10).

Mankind is condemned in Adam, so even if a person were to perfectly keep the Mosaic Law, or any law of works, it would not be enough to save the soul (Rom 5:12-15). Sin is "bad news" but the word "gospel" comes from the

Greek word EUAGGELIA and means "good news." The "Good News" is the Gospel which is given and received by grace (1 Cor 15:1-8).

Salvation is the same in every era of mankind (known as a "Dispensation") (Gal 3:8). This salvation is called "Eternal" which means that it never changes and guarantees it will never be lost (Rev 14:6).

The role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the Gospel (John 16:13-14). Satan is the Gospel's declared enemy (2 Cor 4:3-4), and he promotes a false gospel based upon works (Gal 1:6-8).

C. Some Characteristics of the Gospel

The roots of the Gospel are in God's Grace (Acts 20:24). It is the power of God for salvation, which is available to anyone by faith (Rom 1:16-17). It gives all the Glory to God (1 Tim 1:11). It carries a message of peace for the receiver (Eph 6:14-15) and offers the Kingdom of God to everyone who would believe (Matt 24:14).

The Gospel was given to and accepted by the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:8; 2 Cor 4:3-4; 1 Thes 1:5; Jude 17) who taught that the messenger of the Gospel needs to be honorable so that nothing distracts from the message (1 Thes 1:5).

D. Salvation According to Scripture

Even if a person were to perfectly keep the Mosaic Law, salvation is only by faith in Christ Jesus, so the keeping of the Law would not save, since that would be salvation by works (Gal 2:15-16). Salvation is not based on any works, not even the righteous ones (Titus 3:5-7). Therefore, man cannot save his own soul (Matt 16:25-26; 19:25-26).

Since faith is the means of access to God, salvation becomes a matter of faith (Heb 11:6). The merit and thus power of faith is in the object (Jas 2:19). Since the merit and power is in the object, belief in Christ is all that is necessary for even the greatest sinner, for He alone is worthy (1 Tim 1:16).

Jesus first came to save the world not to judge it (John 3:16-18; John 12:47-48). God's Word about Jesus Christ, accepted by faith, leads to salvation of the soul (Jas 1:21; Rom 1:16).

E. Jesus Is the Only Way of Salvation

John the Baptist carried the message of faith (John 1:7-8) which was about faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:36; 6:47-48; 8:24). The word "baptism" refers to a ritual act that was used to teach identification with something or someone. Roman soldiers used to dip the tips of their spears into blood to "identify" with the coming battle. This was a common understanding of the word baptism as it was used in the time of Christ. Identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection through faith is the reality of what really saves a soul from hell (1 Pet 3:21; Rom 6:4-7).⁴⁵

Thus, all are commanded to believe in Him (1 John 3:23-24). Even if man considers the Gospel to be foolish, it is all that is necessary for salvation (1 Cor 1:21).

Jesus Christ is the Father's "message," so to believe the Father, an individual must believe in the Son (John 5:24; 12:44-46). Jesus is the One who saves from sins (Matt 1:21), thus belief in Him is necessary to be forgiven from sins (Acts 10:43), and saved from sin's eternal penalty (Acts 16:30-31). No person is too great a sinner to be beyond salvation by grace through faith (1 Tim 1:15), but each must **"call upon the Name (reputation) of the Lord"** (Acts 2:21).

⁴⁵ **1 Pet 3:21** And corresponding to that [ANTITUPOS = 2x; see Heb 9:24; as a type set against a type, i.e., {for example} a better type], baptism now saves you— not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience— through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **Rom 6:4-7** Therefore we [Believers] have been buried with Him through baptism [identification with] into [His] death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with [our Sin Nature will be removed at physical death or the Rapture], that we should no longer be slaves to [the Greek has the word "the"] sin [nature]; ⁷ for he who has died [with Christ through identification with His work] is freed from [the eternal effects of] [the] sin.

The Gospel that saves is based on faith in the death, burial, and literal resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-8). Only by the work and thus reputation of Jesus can anyone be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the only “Entry Door” to salvation (John 10:9; 14:6).

F. What is Accomplished by the Gospel?

The Holy Spirit responds to our faith in Christ and brings about salvation (2 Thes 2:13), through giving God's righteousness to those who believe in His Son (Rom 3:21-23; 4:3-5).

Once we believe in Christ, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit which indicates approval by God as a permanent status (Eph 1:13-14). The belief that we are saved based on faith permits us to have a sense of peace in this life (Heb 4:1-3) because it guarantees resurrection to life eternal (1 Thes 4:13-14).

Those who believe in Christ become children of God (1 John 5:1-5) and He imparts to His children Spiritual gifts (Acts 11:17).

G. Other Kinds of Deliverance

The Greek words for ‘salvation’ are used for other kinds of deliverance. Believers are already saved from the eternal wrath of God (John 3:36). Now as part of the family of God (having joined the family through adoption) we can also be saved from a lack of perseverance, character, and hope (Rom 5:9-10 cf. 5:3-5). Justification (the receiving of righteousness) by faith saves us eternally, while confession of Christ during our lives saves us from additional sins that deny Him (Rom 10:8-11), such as failing to proclaim your relationship to Him to others when faced with possible harm. This is not a salvation from the penalty for sin but actually from the power of sin. The penalty for sin is death and with the penalty removed by Christ, we can be saved by faith. The power of sin is still present in the life of the Believer which is evidenced by the fact that Believers still sin (1 John 1:8-10). At the moment when an individual believes in the Lord Jesus Christ they are eternally saved from the penalty for sin, but will battle the power of sin until they receive their new body (Gal 5:16-17). Our human works done for selfish reasons may be burned up, but our eternal salvation remains (1 Cor 3:15). The different types of salvation will be more fully explained in upcoming chapters.

H. Six Modern Challenges to the Real Jesus (as presented by Lee Strobel)⁴⁶

1. Some Claim That “Scholars Are Uncovering a Radically Different Jesus In Ancient Documents Just as Credible as the Four Gospels” (The Four Gospels are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)

The fact is that they are referring to alternative texts that were written too long after the events to be credible, most around 200 A.D. They were never verified as canonical because they often contained historical inaccuracies or the recipients did not initially accept them as inspired of God.

2. The Bible's Portrait of Jesus Can't Be Trusted Because the Church Tampered with the Text

It did not. The Church has gone to great lengths to preserve the text and less than 1% of all manuscripts have any words that do not agree with other manuscripts. As previously mentioned, the New Testament can be almost entirely reconstructed from the quotes of the early Church Fathers who lived prior to the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church. This is another example of how Satan attacks God's Word with outright lies and unproven assertions.

3. New Explanations Have Refuted Jesus' Resurrection

These are primarily the claims of some world religions who believe Jesus never really died on the cross. They have been part of the attack on the Resurrection of Christ because if they can discredit His resurrection they discredit the central issue of Christianity (1 Cor 15:12-17). All of the early church fathers attested to Christ's Resurrection. Many eyewitnesses testified to His death and resurrection, including those who were not Believers.

4. Christianity Copied Their Beliefs About Jesus from Pagan Religions

This is simply not true and lacks authentic documentation. There are no examples, from religions that preceded Christianity, of “gods” dying and rising from the dead to save others. Even if there were teachings of such a nature, an honest evaluation would show the teachings would follow the Scriptural teachings instead of preceding them. Many who make this claim either do not know ancient history or have intentionally lied.

⁴⁶ Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus*, Zondervan, 2007, pp 15-21

5. Jesus Was an Imposter Who Failed to Fulfill the Messianic Prophecies

This claim about unfulfilled prophecies by Christ comes from books that were never accepted as Scripture. When a person considers books outside the Bible to be infallible then in their own mind they can “prove” anything. They could even write a book themselves and then cite it for proof. Jesus literally fulfilled all Biblical prophecies regarding His first appearance and has promised to fulfill the rest on His future appearances.

6. People Should Be Free to Decide What to Believe About Jesus

This comes from the belief that all religions lead to heaven. Each individual is indeed free to choose what to believe, but what mankind comes to believe does not change Who and what Jesus has revealed Himself to be, nor does it change the Truth. Wise people follow the evidence.

I. Five Facts About Jesus

- **Jesus Was Killed by Crucifixion** (Mark 15:24-27 & John 19:17-18) (The “&” sign is used throughout this book to denote parallel passages in the Gospels).
- **Jesus’ Tomb Was Empty** (Matt 28:5-6 & Mark 16:6 & Luke 24:4-6).
- **Jesus’ Disciples Testified That He Rose and Appeared to Them** (1 Cor 15:3-8).
- **A Great Persecutor of the Church, Paul, Converted to Christianity** (Acts 9:1-2; 9:19-22).
- **The Skeptic James, Jesus’ Half-Brother, Also Converted** (John 7:3-5 cf. Book of James).

It is reasonable to believe that Jesus is the only object of faith that can eternally save souls from their sins. Throughout history, no one has ever been able to honestly counter the facts that were clearly established by many different witnesses.

Can the problem of sin and death be solved? There are only two possible solutions. Either a person has to find a way to save oneself or find a savior. Wisdom will look to the best evidence for a solution, so what is the best option to solve the problem of sin and its effects on eternity? Only Christianity has a Savior Who has conquered death. Only one credible person made the offer to believe in Him and have eternal life.

To answer the question concerning the assurances God gave about eternity begins by accepting that only grace from The God can save souls from the penalty for sin. To believe that God is true in His revelation provides assurance of eternity.

For Personal Study:

- ✓ **Discuss the nature of grace and the importance of the giver.**
- ✓ **Discuss the importance of grace in dealing with the problem of sin.**
- ✓ **What is salvation according to Scripture?**
- ✓ **How does “water baptism” display spiritual truth?**
- ✓ **Discuss the permanency of our salvation.**
- ✓ **Give examples from Scripture of a Believer battling the power of sin.**
- ✓ **Apply the historical facts to the challenges to Jesus’ Messiahship.**
- ✓ **Is Christianity based in factual history? Discuss.**

Chapter 7

Exposing the Counterfeits: Deception by the World

Exposing the Counterfeits: Deception by the World

What Deceptions Does The World Use to Affect Our Confidence?

The preceding chapters have established reasonable answers to key questions in life. The answers are based on evidence. As a reminder, evidence is “something which shows that something else exists or is true” and is often a “visible indication” of a fact.⁴⁷ The merit of FAITH is in the object and the object is only as good as the supporting evidence. A person might believe that the earth evolved from matter, but based on the evidence the world exists because it has a Creator.

While it may appear that there are many options for a personal system of belief that are correct, wisdom would look for the system with the best supporting evidence. This chapter and its accompanying data found at the back of this book in the Appendices will show why cults and world religions do not meet important conditions that would make them worthy of FAITH.

In the search for truth, it is important to consider all the options. Every worldview has common elements that must be addressed to take an honest look at all the options. Throughout this study, the Christian worldview has been discussed, but it has been through the common elements that make up all systems of theological thought. The foundational worldview of each system of belief involves the source of authority that is followed and how that source is to be interpreted. This is called, “Epistemology.” For the Christian the source of authority is the Bible and its study is called “Hermeneutics.” Authority is the basic element of FAITH which lets us proceed to the second step, which is called REALITY.

REALITY is composed of four parts. The first element of REALITY deals with the nature of our being (called “Ontology”). The second concerns determining what things are valuable (called “Axiology”). The third involves explanation of the ultimate causes of all things (called “Teleology”). The fourth involves the study of the future (called “Eschatology”). The study of FAITH and REALITY tells us what exists, not just for now but for eternity.⁴⁸

Once what exists is determined (the REALITY), the next step is to determine the response or what one “ought” to do as a result of the chosen system of FAITH. This study of what actions are righteous within that system are called “Ethics.” Within every worldview there are expectations in thought and action for both Believers and unbelievers in the system. The final applications involve what should be done in relationship to the society in which a person lives.

For example, if a person believes that humans are the ultimate beings then they have accepted a REALITY that there is no God (Ontology) and that we are the products of evolution. This results in the viewpoint that only the things of this world are valuable (Axiology). They believe that the ultimate explanation for all things is a result of chance happenings, instead of intentional design (Teleology). This belief system concludes with the thought that there is nothing beyond this life to consider (Eschatology). The result of this belief system is that whatever benefits them is ethical. Any society in which they live has the responsibility to provide for their needs. This system of FAITH produces very self-centered people.

While considering these important principles it leads us to ask if there are other good options for the salvation that concerns eternity. Let us compare the option offered through FAITH in Jesus Christ to what the world presents as eternal salvation.

A. The Option that Saves

Whoever believes in Jesus, the Son of God, has eternal life with Him (John 3:16-18; 3:36). The extremes between heaven and hell are so great that to know about heaven should lead people to want it and to know about hell should lead them to do anything to avoid it. Whoever does not believe in the Son will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire (Matt 25:41). Some people mistakenly believe that all of humanity is striving for and headed toward the same place after physical death. That statement displays an ignorance of the different systems of belief that are offered in the world.

There exists an unpardonable sin (one that will never be forgiven), called “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” (Mark 3:28-29). Simply explained, the role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the Son (John 16:13-15), so whoever believes

⁴⁷ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>, June 20, 2018

⁴⁸ Dr. Christopher Cone, *Priority In Biblical Hermeneutics and Theological Method*, 2018

in the Son is born into God's family and has thus accepted the Spirit's revelation of the Son (1 John 5:1-5). It is unpardonable to call the Holy Spirit a liar about Jesus (not have faith in Him) for the entirety of one's life. All unbelievers are blasphemers of the Holy Spirit until they believe. It is possible to place faith in Jesus as Messiah up until the point of physical death. One example of this truth is the thief on the cross (Luke 23:42-43). Another is the unbelieving Jews who were blaspheming Him and would eventually turn Him over to Pilate, to whom He said that they **"would die in their sins unless they believed"** (John 8:21-24).

Those who reject the Son accept the consequences of their decision. A diligent study of the Scriptures is necessary to remove doubts about what is Truth (2 Tim 2:15), so may we have a spiritual thirst to drink from the water of life that is found in the Holy Bible (Rev 22:17-21).

Satan and the world have presented other options for salvation. We know them as cults and world religions. Our first consideration will concern cults and their common characteristics.

B. Characteristics of Cults

This study will identify the characteristics that constitute a cult. It will also look at some of the major cults and their practices. While each person has the freedom to follow the religious beliefs of their choice, Believers are called on to "defend the faith," (1 Pet 3:15) when people claim to speak the Truth but do not.

1. What Is a Cult?

A cult is a perversion or distortion of Biblical Christianity and often includes a rejection of the historic teachings of the Christian Church. Walter Martin defines a cult as, "a group of people polarized (holding a strong opinion) around someone's interpretation of the Bible and is characterized by major deviations (movements away from truth) from orthodox Christianity relative to the central doctrines of the Christian faith, particularly the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ."⁴⁹

2. What Attracts People to Cults?

Cults claim to provide "answers" to life's issues but actually prey on people's ignorance. Often they meet basic human needs including love, feeling needed, having direction and meaning.

Cults take advantage of man's basic desire to know and serve God. They offer solutions in a simple format that tell their followers what to believe, how to behave, what to think, and emphasize dependence upon the group or leader for their emotional stability.

Their continual growth is due in part to the fact that the "Universal Church" (all who have accepted Jesus as Messiah from the Day of Pentecost until the Rapture, which is discussed more later in this book) has failed to be a vital influence in the world, often falling prey to a quest for power rather than to distribute and teach Truth.

3. The Characteristics

Many cults promote the idea that God has revealed something special to them, thus claiming to have "new truth." Usually the so-called "truth" has never before been revealed and supersedes and contradicts all previous revelations. They may also claim to have found "truth" that has been hidden for centuries by organized religion and recently discovered. Another frequent claim is that it completes what they call the Bible's "inadequate message."

Some cults make no claim to new truth or extra-Biblical revelation, but believe that they alone have the key to the interpretation of the Scriptures, which contradicts the basic beliefs of orthodox Christianity, thus they possess a "new interpretation."

Other cults also follow a non-Biblical source of authority for their faith and practice, either in other book(s) or interpretation(s).

One characteristic of all cults is another "jesus," who is always significantly different and less in character and power than the historical Jesus of the Bible. He is often "just a man" and not, "The God in the flesh."

A common strategy of many cults is to attack openly the theology of orthodox Christianity with the primary focus on the Trinity. All cults promote "salvation by works," and not grace so their very gospel message

⁴⁹ Walter Martin, *The Rise of the Cults*, 1955, p 12

seeks to enslave the recipient to their viewpoints. They also add to Scripture to promote their message and gain power over their followers.

Cults are also noted for altering Christian theology to justify sinful behaviors. They are often guilty of “double talk,” which means to say one thing publicly but privately believe something quite different. Frequently they embrace and promote sexual immorality.

Cults are usually characterized by a dominant central leader who considers himself or herself a special messenger of God with unique access to the Almighty. This person thus exercises enormous control over the belief, behavior, and lifestyle of the group. The followers often become totally dependent upon their leader. Since the leader claims to have a unique access to God, he or she often makes bold predictions about future events. All cult leaders who have been around any length of time have uttered a false prophecy.

Cults are difficult to leave. Some churches, while technically not cults, are like cults (cultic) in that people are more drawn to the personality of the leader than they are to the Lord and His Word.

4. The Standard for Identifying Cults

There has to be a standard to identify cults and that standard is the major tenets of God's Word. Although there are disagreements among the major branches of Christianity concerning the major tenets, there is a general agreement as to the essential elements of the faith which are:

- The Bible is divinely inspired and is authoritative for matters of faith and practice (2 Tim 3:16-17).
- The Doctrine of God is clear that there are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory (Matt 28:19).
- Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God in human flesh (John 1:1,14).
- Jesus was always God who made divine claims (John 14:9) and did divine works (Col 1:16).
- The Doctrine of The Church includes the Universal Church, which is invisible (Col 1:18), and the visible local church (1 Cor 1:2) as it is manifested in different locations.
- The Doctrine of the Atonement (the covering of sins until the penalty was paid) states that Jesus Christ was the perfect satisfaction to God as a just and substitutionary punishment for the sins of the world (1 John 2:1-2).
- The Doctrine of Salvation states that we are "saved by grace through faith, not of works" (Eph 2:8-9).
- The Doctrine of Man states "God created man, male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures (Gen 1:26-28).
- The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit states that the Holy Spirit is personal and is God (Gal 5:16-17; Rom 5:5).

5. Ministering to the Cults

Most cult leaders and members are unbelievers who need to know the real Jesus. Believers who seek to “snatch others from the fire,” need to first devote themselves to prayer seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit. Cult members are part of the prophesied “mockers” of the last days but by God's grace are reachable (Jude 17-23). They have possibly been "brainwashed" to some degree through isolation from the outside, deprivation of sleep, food or other essential elements of life. “Brainwashing” is a term used to describe a process by which people change their values, usually through constant repetition of the cultic beliefs. They may be very difficult to reach.

When a Believer seeks to win others away from a cult, it is important to know not only what the cult believes but also why they believe it. A Believer's faith must be solid, with no ongoing sin in their life. They must function in love and pay particular attention to the sin of arrogance (Gal 6:1-3) in order to effectively minister to members of a cult.

It is also essential, if possible, to understand to some degree the belief system of the cult to know what they really mean when they speak. Frequently normal Christian words have been redefined by the cult to mislead outsiders. Often the cult leader is ministering to individuals who have experienced excessive pain and have found a way to ease that pain. The followers are often seeking relief from abusive parents or leaders who have failed to “build up” their children or supporters and are looking for a solution to their internal pain. As a result the cult becomes like a drug to the participant and those seeking to lead them out of the cult must realize that the cult followers have an addiction.

6. Some Practical Applications for Believers That Want to Minister to Cult Members:

- Seek their spiritual well-being more than winning a theological debate.
- Seek to win their trust through openness and honesty. Always keep your word.
- Be patient when discussing their viewpoints.
- Listen carefully to their story, with as little interruption as possible.
- Learn to ask questions and ask a lot of them. Let them answer.
- Pray for the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in your life.
- If you get confused, graciously exit and seek help from a wise counselor.
- Realize that it will probably take more than one discussion.
- Beware of trying to deal with deceivers such as these so that you do not get misled (2 John 9-11).

C. World Religions

Religion is that aspect of personal experience in which an individual attempts to live harmoniously with the power or powers he or she believes are controlling the world. It is a universal phenomenon because humanity is always giving some recognition to a power or powers beyond themselves. Even Atheists believe that although they do not control the world, they should, so there is a religious devotion to that belief. Atheism can be just as avidly promoted as any world religion.

Religion is designed to meet needs in that it connects the individual to the higher power(s) who can meet those needs. It is one of the things that distinguish mankind from animals.

The Bible teaches that after the Noahic Flood all people were moved to the plain of Shinar in the Tigris-Euphrates river valley (Gen 11:1-9). The people descended into evil, by what appears to be their own efforts to escape another flood, in spite of the promise of The Creator God never to destroy the entire earth again (Gen 9:8-17). God chose to confuse their languages and disperse them into all the earth. One probable reason for the dispersion is that they came to worship many gods rather than just the One and took that belief with them into different parts of the world. Along with that belief people took the knowledge of one God, the Creator, that we know as Yahweh Elohim. They would have to decide what is correct, one God or many? In any event, the worship of Yahweh Elohim preceded all the other world religions.

This point is very important because when history is viewed correctly, the various world religions are simply distortions of the Truth. The Truth is that God created from nothing the heavens and the earth and sent His Son to pay for the sins of helpless and hopeless humanity. The result was that through simple faith in His Son, and not from their own works, could humanity indeed realize:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

The practices of religion are as varied as the religions. All religions are not the same, as some claim, because all do not have nor attain the same goals, that of access to or attainment of God.

A complete study of the major world religions is beyond the scope of this book, but it is important to note that all of them disagree with the major tenets of evangelical Christianity. As a student learns from this book they will be able to determine why world religions are false.

What deception does the world use to affect our confidence? There are many structured systems of belief that are counterfeits of the Truth. They constantly seek to destroy our confidence in the Almighty God and His promises.

For Personal Study:

- ✓ **What must anyone do to be saved?**
- ✓ **What are some of the similarities between cults?**
- ✓ **What are some of the similarities between world religions?**
- ✓ **What are some of the suggestions offered in ministering to people involved in cults and world religions?**

Chapter 8

Embracing the 50 Blessings of Salvation

Embracing the 50 Blessings of Salvation

What Is the Extent of the Evidence That Assures Our Salvation?

(See Chart)

It is valid to look for more evidence that assures our salvation from the penalty for sins. Having accepted that the Creator (**God**) revealed (**Revelation**) Himself perfectly through **Inspiration** and that by seeking to know the **Author's Will** we can find **Truth**, it is valid to search His Word for additional information so that we may be more confident in the **Assurance** of our salvation.

The previous chapter presented some basic information about selected cults and world religions. It is easy to see that there is a vast difference between their beliefs and those of true Christianity. All of them seek ways to work to arrive at heaven and all have added to the promises of God to describe what they view to be a life in service to their god(s). The "God of the Christians" is One who has been faithful and true throughout history. He has made promises and kept them. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that He will continue to keep His Word since He is the same, **"yesterday, today and forever"** (Heb 13:8).

The Scripture plainly says in 1 John 5:13, **"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life."** It is possible to know with confidence where and in what condition you will spend eternity. The assurance of your salvation is promised by the Word of God. Some simply have a childlike faith in the Lord and believe the promise of eternal life and that eternal life can never end. Others take more convincing and need more statements from the Word of God. If you are one of those, this section is for you.

This chapter lists 50 things an individual receives at the moment of faith in Jesus the Messiah. They are all grace gifts (as per the Greek word, CHARISMA, which literally means "a result of grace"), which the Scripture says will never be revoked (Rom 11:29).

A. We are Released from Condemnation in Adam (Rom 5:17-19)

1. **Our Spiritual Death Is Removed, Meaning That the Penalty of Death All Humanity Inherits From Adam Has Been Cancelled** (Rom 5:12; 6:23; John 5:24; 1 Cor 15:22)
2. **God's Wrath Is Removed from Believers, Meaning the Eternal Consequences of Sin Are Forever Removed** (John 3:36; Rom 5:9-10; Eph 2:3; 5:6)
3. **Our Once Spiritually Blind Eyes Can Now See, Meaning That the Deceptions of Satan and His Forces Have Been Exposed** (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 4:3-4; 2 Tim 1:8-10)
4. **Our Spiritual Alienation Is Removed, Meaning That Our Separation from Christ Because of Sin No Longer Exists** (Eph 2:12-15; Rom 5:6; Col 1:21)
5. **Our Hostility Is Removed, Meaning That as Unbelievers We Were Enemies of God and Hostile to Him Whether We Realized It or Not** (Rom 5:10; Col 1:21-22; Eph 2:15-16)
6. **Our Eternal Condemnation Is Removed** (Rom 5:16-18; 8:1-3)
7. **The Penalty for Our Unrighteousness Is Removed** (Rom 3:10,22-24; 10:10)
8. **We Are Transferred from Satan's Kingdom to God's** (Col 1:13-14; Eph 5:8; Acts 26:18)
9. **We Are Freed from the Curse of the Law Written Down by Moses** (Gal 3:10-14; Rom 10:4; Col 2:14)
10. **We Are Freed from the Slave Market of Sin Which Is a Descriptive Title for Our Condition as Slaves to Our Sinful Natures** (Gal 4:7; 5:1,13; Rom 6:6-9, 17-20)
11. **We are no longer simply a "natural man," like we were before accepting Jesus Christ as Savior** (Jude 19; 1 Cor 2:12-14; 15:45-46)

12. **We Can No Longer Perish, Which Means We Can No Longer Enter a Total Loss of Well-Being** (John 3:16; 10:27-28; 1 Cor 1:18; 15:16-18; 2 Cor 4:3-4)
13. **Our Ungodly Status Is Changed** (Rom 1:18; 4:5; 5:6-8,12,19; 1 Tim 1:8-9,15; 2 Pet 1:5-7)

These Thirteen Points Are Summarized In the Table Below:

Two Issues in Life Sin and Eternity Resolved through Faith in Christ		
<u>Problems with Man</u>		<u>Solutions in God</u>
Condemnation in Adam	S I N B A R R I E R	Spiritual death removed
Recipient of wrath		Peace is offered
Spiritually blind		Spiritual sight is given
Spiritual alienation		Family member of God
Enemy of God		An ally of God
Eternally condemned		Gift of righteousness
Unrighteous		Declared righteous
In Satan's Kingdom		Transferred to God's Kingdom
Cursed by the law		Redeemed from curse of law
In sin's slave market		Set free from penalty of death
Natural man		Spiritual man
Perishable body		Imperishable body
Ungodly by nature		Godly by choice

B. God Gives Us Gifts so That We May Fellowship with Him

There is the potential for real spiritual intimacy with Him (1 John 1:6-7).

1. The Gift of Redemption Means That Our Freedom Has Been Purchased by Him

Therefore, this relationship is costly and has the potential for great appreciation of our Redeemer (1 Pet 1:18-19; Heb 9:11-12; 1 Cor 6:20; Eph 1:7).

2. The Gift of Reconciliation Meaning That We Are Now at Peace with God

Therefore, there is a new relationship with the potential of harmony with Him (2 Cor 5:17-19; Col 1:20; Eph 2:16).

3. The Gift of Justification Meaning That God Gave Us His Righteousness

Therefore, this righteous relationship has the potential of living an honorable life in service to Him (Rom 5:1,8-9,18).

4. The Gift of Sanctification Meaning That God Set Us Apart or Made Us Holy

Therefore, this special relationship has the potential for holiness in thought, speech and action (1 Cor 1:2,30; Col 1:22; Heb 10:10,29).

5. The Gift of Propitiation Meaning That God's Righteousness and Justice Are Satisfied and We Do Not Have to Seek to Appease It

Therefore this relationship is valuable and has the potential for contentment in life (Rom 3:24-26; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:10).

6. The Gift of Forgiveness Meaning That God Removed the Penalty for Our Sins

Therefore a potential exists for transparency (full honesty) before God (Eph 1:7; 4:32; Heb 9:22; 1 John 1:7-9).

7. **The Gift of Cleansing Meaning That God Healed Us from the Eternal Effects of Sin**
Therefore this transforming relationship has the potential of purification from more sin and the healing in time from sin's effects (1 John 1:7-9; Heb 9:8-15).
8. **The Gift of a New Covenant Which Is Designed to Remind Us of His Grace**
Therefore this relationship has future expectations of a close relationship with God and the potential for encouragement in the present (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 10:9-18; 12:24).
9. **The Gift of Victory in the Angelic Conflict⁵⁰ Meaning the Outcome of the Battle Is Certain**
Therefore this relationship is secure with the potential of confidence about the future (Rev 12:10-11; 1 John 2:14; 3:8; 5:4).

These Nine Gifts and Their Potential Are Summarized In this Table:

<u>Gift</u>	<u>Potential</u>
Redemption	Appreciation of the Redeemer
Reconciliation	Harmony with God and others
Justification	Honor through service to Him
Sanctification	Holiness in life before Him
Propitiation	Contentment toward the circumstances of life
Forgiveness	Transparency before the throne
Cleansing	Healing from the effects of sin
New Covenant	Encouragement in the present
Victory	Confidence about the future

C. The Works of the Holy Spirit in Salvation (Acts 1:5-8)

1. **The Work of Regeneration (Being Born Again) Which Accomplishes a New Birth** (John 3:1-8; 6:63; Titus 3:5)
2. **The Work of Granting Spiritual life, Which Replaces the Spiritual Death Received from Adam** (Eph 2:5; Rom 8:9-11; Gal 5:16; 2 Cor 2:15-16)
3. **The Work of Sealing with God's Stamp of Approval** (2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:13-14)
4. **The Work of His Sovereign Bestowal of Spiritual Gifts, Which Are Extra Blessings Given and Designed for Service to Him** (1 Cor 12:11-14; Rom 12:3-8)
5. **The Work of Indwelling the Believer with God Taking Residence Inside Believers so That Intimacy Can Occur** (1 Cor 6:19-20; Gal 3:1-3; Rom 8:9; Eph 2:22)
6. **The Work of Opening Access to God, Which Is God's Invitation for Fellowship** (Eph 2:13,18; Heb 4:14-16; 10:21-22)
7. **The Work of Adoption into God's Family** (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-6; Eph 1:5; Heb 12:8)
8. **The Work of Baptism Which Means that a Person Has Chosen the Lord and Thus Identified with God** (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4-6; Gal 3:26-29; Rom 6:1-7)

⁵⁰ The "Angelic Conflict" is the battle between God and Satan for the souls of mankind.

These Eight Works of the Holy Spirit and Their Results Are Summarized In this Table:

<u>Work of Holy Spirit</u>	<u>Result</u>
Regeneration	Fresh start
Spiritual life	Connected to God
Sealing	Assured of approval from God
Spiritual gifts	Equipped to serve
Indwelling	Intimate with God
Access to God	Invited as a welcomed guest
Adoption	Family relationship
Baptism	Identified with Jesus' work

D. Our New Status as a Member of the Royal Family of God (1 Pet 2:9)

- 1. We Are Part of God's Family and Have Brothers and Sisters Which Indicates Our Relationship to Other Believers (1 Thes 1:4; Heb 2:9-12; Eph 3:14-15)**
- 2. We Are Now a "Son of God" Meaning That We Have a Family Relationship With God the Father (Gal 3:26; Rom 8:14-16; John 1:12-13)**
- 3. We Are Now a "Child of Light" Meaning We Have a Family Relationship With the Son, Who Is the Light (Eph 5:8-9; John 1:4-9; 1 John 1:5-7; 1 Thes 5:4-8; Col 1:12-13)**
- 4. We Are Now a "Child of Promise" Indicating Our Eternal Relationship to the Father (Rom 9:8-9; Gal 3:1-29; Gal 4:28-31)**
- 5. We Are Now in the "Church of the Firstborn" Referring to Christ's Special Rights as "The Firstborn of God" and His Sharing of Those Rights (Heb 12:23; Rom 8:29; Col 1:15-20; Rev 1:5)**
- 6. We Are Called His "Beloved" Meaning That We Have Received God's Love (Rom 1:7; Eph 1:6; Col 3:12)**
- 7. We Are a "New Creation" Meaning We Have Been Changed by God (Col 3:9-11; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:14-16)**
- 8. We Have Been "Chosen" by God Meaning That His Foreknowledge Knew We Would Believe in His Son, and Therefore He Was Prepared for Us to Join Him (Eph 1:4-5; 2 Thes 2:13-14; 1 Pet 1:1-2)**
- 9. We Are Now Declared Righteous and Have Been Made So at Great Cost (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 3:21-26; Rom 5:21; 1 John 2:1)**
- 10. We Now Possess Eternal Life Which Means That the Problem of Death Has Been Solved and the Relationship Will Endure Forever (1 John 5:11-13; John 11:25-27; 20:31)**

These Ten Family Titles and Their Blessings Are Summarized in This Table:

<u>Family Title</u>	<u>Blessing</u>
Brethren	We have a relationship to other Believers
Son of God	We have a relationship with the Father
Child of Light	We have a relationship to the Son
Child of Promise	We are guaranteed blessing
Firstborn	We are guaranteed special blessing
Beloved	We have received God's love
New Creation	We have been changed
Chosen	We have a place prepared for us
Righteous	We had our unrighteousness replaced
Possessor	We have an enduring relationship

E. The Believer's Privileges as Royal Family of God (1 Cor 2:9)

- 1. We Are "Ambassadors" Meaning We Carry God's Message to Others as His Personal Representatives (2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 6:15,20)**
- 2. We Are "Royal Priests" Who Are to Serve and Worship Him (1 Pet 2:5,9)**
- 3. We Are "Fellow-Heirs" With Our Brother Jesus Christ and Therefore Share a Family Fellowship (Rom 8:16-17; Gal 4:7; Acts 20:32)**
- 4. We Have an Inheritance Reserved in Heaven as a Promise of Rewards for Obedient Service (1 Pet 1:3-4; Col 1:12; Eph 1:3,18; Heb 9:15)**
- 5. We Hold a "Heavenly Citizenship" Which Has Current Responsibilities for Life (Php 3:20-21; Eph 2:19; Heb 12:22-23)**
- 6. We Possess "Sainthood" Which Is a Special Designation for All Believers (Php 4:21-22; 2 Thes 1:10-12; Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2)**
- 7. We Hold a Membership in the Body of Christ Which Is an Exclusive Society (1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 1:22-23; 5:23, 29-30)**
- 8. We Can Become "Bondslaves" to Jesus Christ Because We Serve a Great Master (Gal 1:10; 1 Cor 7:22-23; Eph 6:6-8; 1 Pet 2:16)**
- 9. We Are a "Living Stone" in God's House Meaning We Are Important in God's Plan (1 Pet 2:4-8; 1 Cor 3:9,16; Eph 2:19-22)**
- 10. We Have Accepted Our "Calling" Meaning That We Are an Invited Guest to an Eternal Celebration (2 Tim 1:8-9; Rom 8:28-30; Col 3:15; 1 Cor 1:9, 22-26)**

These Ten Positions and Their Privileges Are Summarized in This Table:

<u>Our Position</u>	<u>Our Privilege</u>
Ambassador	Representative of the Almighty
Priest	Service and worship
Fellow-heir	Blessed relationship
Inheritance	Eternally rich
Heavenly citizenship	Responsibility in time
Sainthood	Special place
Membership	Elite organization
Bondslave	Serve great master
Living Stone	Important to His plan
Called	An invited guest

F. Summary

This chapter has presented 50 good reasons that salvation is assured for eternity when a person accepts Jesus as the Messiah. Assurance of eternal salvation does not give permission to sin, but instead it is a call to service out of thanksgiving to the One who promises it.

The main point is that we can stop trying to work to get into heaven and work to thank Him because it is already guaranteed.

The question asked at the beginning of this chapter, "What is the extent of the evidence that assures our salvation?" has been clearly answered with a lot of solid Biblical evidence. The Creator of all things revealed Himself accurately through His Word, so we can have confidence that it is true. Therefore, when He makes promises to His creation we have assurance that He will keep His Word.

There are other avenues of evidence that also teach the assurance of our eternal salvation from the penalty for sin. These will be explored in the next chapter.

For Personal Study:

- ✓ Discuss what it means to be “released from condemnation in Adam.”
- ✓ Discuss how the Spiritual Gifts He bestows are used to develop intimacy with Him.
- ✓ Discuss the importance of the works of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Discuss what it means to be a member of God’s family.
- ✓ Discuss our privileges as the Royal Family of God.

Chapter 9

Evidence for the Eternal Security of the Believer

Evidence for the Eternal Security of the Believer

What Is the Evidence for the Security of Salvation for the Believer?

Since the Creator clearly revealed the conditions for entry into His Kingdom, wouldn't He want us to know with certainty where we will spend eternity? The subject of Eternal Security has been highly debated in The Church for many centuries. This short analysis seeks to apply the previously discussed system of Biblical Hermeneutics to the subject at hand.

In approaching any passage or topic of Scripture, the student must always remember the fact that there are no contradictions in God's word. Confusion about various subjects is caused by our limited knowledge, not because of God. The student of the Word must pay careful attention to the language and terminology used in the Bible that describes how to evaluate our spiritual status.

Many people of Western culture in particular believe they are eternally secure in Jesus Christ, yet do not know why they hold that position other than their mentors have taught them that this position is correct. Serious students of the Word ask, "Why?" There are many valid answers that confirm the fact that should be understood by every Believer.

A. Analysis of Two Common Viewpoints

Many in the history of The Church have held that Believers are sovereignly elected or chosen by God and that salvation never has or will depend on the free choices of mankind. Some claim that humans are not even responsible for faith but that it is supplied or forced. This is known as Calvinist Theology, named after John Calvin (1509-1564 A.D.), one of the original leaders of the Reformation. Others have held that we choose whether or not to be saved and that by an act of will we can even become unsaved. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609 A.D.) held this view, which became known as Arminian Theology. There are varying degrees of beliefs within those two theological systems and this study considers both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Man's responsibility for his own decisions is clearly established with Adam and Eve (Gen 2:16-17) and is proven throughout the rest of Scripture.

In analyzing these and other beliefs, deductive reasoning is the most accurate means of determining truth. Deductive reasoning reasons from the whole to the part, or stated another way, from the universal (what is true for all) to the specific (what is true for individuals). Deductive reasoning is spiritual when we look first into God's Word for universal statements that declare eternal salvation cannot be lost, and then search to see if there are *Scriptural* exceptions to the universal rule. It is reasonable that if the Bible makes the statement, only the Bible has the authority to make an exception. For example, the Scripture says, **"all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God"** (Rom 3:23-23). As should be expected, the only exception made in Scripture is for the Lord Jesus Christ, **"who committed no sin"** (1 Pet 2:21-23). This is an example of spiritual deductive reasoning, which analyzes truth from the whole found in universal statements of God's Word to the specific parts. Spiritual deductive reasoning is valid (if all have sinned except Jesus Christ, then that includes me), while inductive reasoning, which reasons from the specific to the universal (since I have sinned, then all have—which is almost correct), may be lacking in accuracy if the student does not have nor considers all the specific evidence. If a student believes the Bible is accurate, as has been previously shown, then deductive reasoning is valid and correct when the Bible makes a universal statement.

The following considers the reasons to believe that salvation is, "by faith alone in Christ alone," and that once faith is honestly placed in Jesus Christ then God forever guarantees personal salvation. That salvation is therefore secure and assured.

While taking into consideration the viewpoints previously mentioned, it is not the purpose of this study to analyze each of them in detail. Instead, what is presented is the overwhelming Scriptural evidence for the position taken in this study. Many of the following arguments, even if considered alone, would prove the Security of the Believer. Once saved from the eternal wages of sin a Believer cannot become "unsaved."

Some people hear the term "Eternal Security" and react to those who believe people are predestined either to heaven or hell. Others believe it is a "license to sin," which views sin as no longer deserving discipline of any kind. While a spiritual "baby" or "adolescent" may seek to use this theological truth as a "license to sin," a mature Believer will appreciate security as a "license to serve" because they are freed from the eternal effects of sin (Gal 5:13).

The word “predestine” comes from the Greek word PROORIDZO, such as is used in Ephesians 1:5. This word is a compound word, meaning it consists of two distinct words that are put together. HORIDZO means, “to mark out, as one does a boundary,” and PRO meaning “beforehand,” thus it means to “mark out a boundary beforehand.” HORIDZO is from the verb HORAO that means, “to see.” When a –DZO ending is placed on a verb it is causative and means “cause to see.” It is in this causative sense that the term “predestine” has come into being. The correct understanding of “predestine” is to “cause to see beforehand” and therefore the word is more concerned with God’s Omniscience that knows what will happen instead of His Omnipotence that has the power to make things happen.

If the word is simply taken in its simplest meaning, indicating to make something seen or visible, and that it is seen or visible beforehand, it is easy to realize that PROORIDZO is similar to another Greek word, PROGINOSKO, which means “to know beforehand.” PROGINOSKO is a word that speaks of God’s Omniscience rather than His Omnipotence. He “knows before it happens.” One of God’s attributes is “Sovereign.” This description comes from the fact that the Lord is “King,” and as the “King,” He has “marked out boundaries beforehand.” The King has established standards and conditions made by His decree. By His decree He made man in His own image (Gen 1:26-27), which must include the perfect ability to decide. Humanity, however, does not have the perfect ability to choose correctly every time.

Through faulty reasoning, some have been led to believe that the personal responsibility of an individual to accept an offer of salvation by faith has been removed and they have no choice. This faulty conclusion appears to exist because many people react to the term Eternal Security, which has been presented in the “predestination” and “elected to salvation” sense. “Election to salvation” means that God chose certain individuals to be saved and because of His choice it is so and that He will force His grace upon the elect until they exercise faith. This viewpoint effectively removes personal responsibility to believe which directly contradicts many passages of the Word, as has been previously shown.

The Calvinistic viewpoint is an inaccurate description of the revealed plan of God. Kings have the ability to make laws and prescribe penalties for violation. As King, God declared that man must come to Him by faith, accept His Son by faith, and live his life by faith (John 3:16,18,36; Col 2:6; Heb 11:6). Mankind is responsible to choose what to believe. If man has no primary responsibility for his own decisions, then God would be the author of sin, which is blasphemy, and if God is responsible for man’s decisions then all will be saved (1 Tim 2:4). For example, a position that believes man does not have a responsibility to “*believe in the Son*” to be saved, must also believe that a multitude of salvation verses in Scripture that call mankind to faith are meaningless and useless, but faith in the Son is the stated will of God. If an individual believes those verses to be “meaningless and useless,” the result is the rejection of the basic beliefs of verbal, plenary inspiration, which says “***all Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable***” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Some Calvinists take God’s Sovereignty and Omnipotence and mold them together to make grace irresistible, meaning nothing can stop the force of grace if an individual has been chosen as “elect.” Others believe that saving grace is going to be given whether the individual accepts the Savior or not. If grace were irresistible, then all would be saved because God’s stated will is that He desires “all to be saved.” Scripture makes it clear that not all will be saved because some will end up in the Lake of Fire (Matt 25:41).

One accusation leveled at those who do not hold to a Calvinistic viewpoint of Sovereignty is that “their God is too small or too weak.” This position comes from those who cannot understand how God can “elect” certain people to salvation, namely to write their names in the “Lamb’s Book of Life” before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8), and still give man the ability to decide concerning his salvation. Instead, the greatness of God should be seen in how He can give His creatures the perfect ability to choose and still “see the end from the beginning” knowing who will choose for Him, and write their names in His book.

Jesus Christ is called “The Elect One” (Luke 9:35) so it is reasonable to believe that those who believe in Him are in union with Him and thus share His election. This fact also leads us to the legitimate conclusion that a person cannot lose salvation once their faith is placed in Him because the Believer becomes part of His eternal body. Two different authors of Scripture state that our salvation was foreknown by God in eternity past (Rom 8:29; 1 Pet 1:1-2). The parameters of our salvation were “marked out beforehand” and those who meet the previously established conditions enter inside the boundary through Jesus Christ and therefore are saved (as Jesus taught in the “Parable of the Good Shepherd” in John 10:1-18).

Some Arminians believe that a person is saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, but can lose their salvation through sin(s). It is this position that will be examined during the course of this study. While there are verses that clearly indicate the Believer can experience loss, he or she must ask “loss of what?” and “when?” and “for what reason(s)?” Without reasonable answers to these questions, the study is incomplete.

It would be valuable to your Christian life to take the time to prayerfully consider the following proposals presented in this chapter. The result will be a greater assurance of salvation and with that a greater peace of soul. None of the world’s religions can offer assurance of the afterlife, because all are based on human works, which even they recognize may never be enough. Only Christians have the means to know with certainty where they will spend eternity (1 John 5:13). The Lord, as the standard for truth, made these statements through His Word (1 Tim 6:3-4).

There are various ways to prove that once a person receives the Gospel they are forever saved. The next sections will explore some of them. Keep in mind that only one of them needs be accurate to prove the security of the Believer.

B. The Case for Eternal Salvation from the Penalty for Sin

Judges have existed throughout history. Those who sought to make honorable rulings have followed some principles that are universally recognized as valuable in the determination of truth. Attorneys present “arguments” for their viewpoints that are taken before judges. This is called a “case.” When judgments need to be rendered, evidence must be gathered to determine the truth or falsehood, or guilt or innocence of a particular set of circumstances.

The laws of evidence follow certain rules that determine proof of facts in a legal proceeding. These rules determine what evidence must or must not be considered by the authority in charge in reaching its decision and, sometimes, the weight that may be given to each piece of evidence. The law of evidence is also concerned with the amount, quality, and type of evidence needed to prove the argument. Not only is the amount of evidence important but its reliability is as well. There are also various standards that determine how strong the evidence must be to meet the legal burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Each piece of evidence is called an “exhibit” which means it is available for inspection and questioning before rendering the final judgment.

God calls Believers to examine life itself in this manner. Take an honest look at the various arguments for evidence and make a judgment that honors God (1 Thes 5:21-22).

This section will analyze different Biblical “arguments” that are used as evidence to support the position that once a person believes in Jesus Christ they are eternally saved from the penalty for sin. The evidence is directly from the Bible, which has already been established as reliable.

1. The Gospel of Grace Argument

This proposal argues that since the Gospel offers salvation as a gift of grace, once received it will not be withdrawn. Grace by definition is the “unmerited favor of God.”

Exhibit #1: The message of the Gospel is good news to the hearer because of its simplicity (1 Cor 15:1-4).

Exhibit #2: The Holy Spirit reveals the Gospel of Grace (1 Thes 1:5).

Exhibit #3: Thus the Grace Gospel is simple to understand (1 Cor 1:17).

Exhibit #4: The grace message is rooted in grace and therefore guaranteed by grace (Acts 20:24).

Exhibit #5: Grace is the conduit through which the power of God flows to save (Rom 1:16-17; 1 Thes 2:13).

Exhibit #6: Grace gives the glory to God, not man (1 Tim 1:11).

Exhibit #7: Acceptance of the Gospel of Grace establishes peace with God (Eph 2:14-16).

Exhibit #8: The Gospel of Grace never changes (Rev 14:6; Gal 3:8).

Exhibit #9: Satan is the enemy of the Gospel of Grace (2 Cor 4:3-4).

Exhibit #10: There is a false Gospel, which is not of grace but based upon works (Gal 1:6-9).

Exhibit #11: Faith is about trusting God's work for man and thus is not a work in itself (John 6:29).

Exhibit #12: The Gospel of Grace should be presented in a context free from any monetary issues (2 Cor 11:7-8).

Judgment: Since the Gospel and salvation are rooted in grace which is the unmerited favor of God and are given because of faith, salvation by grace is not a revocable gift (Rom 11:29).

2. The Grace Argument

This proposal argues that since God did the most for those who believe while they were His enemies, namely save them, would He do any less now that they are family?

Exhibit #1: Grace is the undeserved favor of God. Therefore, the applications and reasons for it depends on who and what God is, not who and what man is or does (Exo 34:6-7).

Exhibit #2: God displays His grace because the standards of His righteousness and justice exceed man's capabilities but were met by Christ on the cross (1 John 2:1-2).

Exhibit #3: When man receives grace at salvation all the credit is due to God, the Giver. If man could work for and earn salvation, then man would be due the credit (Eph 2:8-10).

Exhibit #4: At the moment of salvation those who believe in Jesus Christ enter into God's plan of grace as newborn babes. The new baby is then instructed to grow up (1 Pet 2:1-3).

Exhibit #5: Since grace is the entry into deliverance from hell, walking in grace is how a Believer is to live (Col 2:6-7).

Exhibit #6: The truth, which is found in the person of Jesus Christ, who distributes grace, is designed to set a Believer free (John 8:31-32).

Exhibit #7: Enemies of grace use legalisms to try to once again enslave Believers to various forms of religious action (Gal 5:1).

Exhibit #8: The freedom given Believers should be used to serve others instead of self (Gal 5:13).

Judgment: Since grace saved those who believe while enemies, grace keeps secure those Believers as family (Rom 5:8-10).

3. The Salvation Argument

This proposal argues that salvation itself is a grace gift and thus will not be withdrawn because of the actions, or lack of, by humanity.

Exhibit #1: Salvation has always been a matter of faith in the One who could save a person from sin. Humanity could never save itself from sins nor do enough good to redeem itself for the sins committed (Titus 3:5-7).

Exhibit #2: Since all sins were judged at the cross, and the forgiveness of Christ was accepted for them, sins cannot undo eternal salvation (Psa 103:12; Isa 1:18).

Exhibit #3: Since Old Testament saints also received righteousness based on faith (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3), like The Church, it follows that the sin of unbelief, continued until physical death, was not imputed to Christ, thus it is the only sin not paid for on the cross (Rom 4:6-8).

This is also known as "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" or the "unpardonable sin" since rejection of the Gospel calls the Holy Spirit a liar concerning Jesus Christ for the entirety of an individual's lifetime. All people, as unbelievers, are blaspheming the Holy Spirit by not accepting Jesus Christ, so the issue is continuing the sin to physical death. It is a lifetime sin (Matt 12:31-32; John 16:13-14; 1 John 5:10-12).

Exhibit #4: Belief in the Messiah (Christ) was the basis for salvation prior to The Church Age (Gen 15:6; Isa 28:16; John 3:5,10-15; 1 Pet 2:6).

Exhibit #5: None who take refuge in Christ will be ashamed or condemned (Psa 34:22).

Judgment: Since salvation is a grace gift, it cannot be revoked (Rom 11:29).

4. The Positional Argument

This proposal is that our position in Christ is evidence of security. The "Positional Argument" is derived from the fact that when faith is placed in the Lord Jesus Christ the new Believer is entered "into" union with Him. The union is well-described by a circle that represents Jesus Christ and another circle inside that represents the Believer.

Exhibit #1: There is a direct statement in the book of Romans that those who are "in" Christ Jesus face no condemnation (Rom 8:1).

The word used in Romans 8:1 is the Greek KATAKRIMA which is only used three times in the New Testament. The other usages are Romans 5:16 and 5:18, where KATAKRIMA is clearly used for "eternal condemnation." Those who are in Christ by faith face no eternal condemnation.

If Believers could face eternal condemnation there would have to be a way to be removed from being "inside" of Jesus Christ, but as a child of God any who attempt to remove us face the power that spoke and brought the heavens into existence (Col 1:15-17).

Some Bible translations (like the King James Version) add the phrase "*who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,*" to Romans 8:1 but that phrase is not found in the oldest manuscripts of the original Greek text, so it should not be considered in the interpretation of the passage.

Exhibit #2: Since Believers are now "sons" of God and "in" Christ Jesus, the love of God for the Believer is equal to His love for His Son (Rom 8:38-39; Eph 1:5-8).

The new position in Christ as a result of faith not only invites the Believer to come to a fuller comprehension and appreciation of God's love, but invites the Believer to experience the power of His love toward His Son. There is no force in the universe that is able to separate the Father's love from His Son and therefore toward His adopted sons (John 10:27-30).

Exhibit #3: Believers already share Christ's resurrection, which has been completed forever (Eph 2:6).

Believers, God's children, who reside in His Son Jesus Christ, are already with Him spiritually in the heavenlies, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Exhibit #4: The "head" cannot remove members of the body and still have a complete body (1 Cor 12:13).

This is an illustration from a human body. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, through the Holy Spirit, union with all Believers of The Church Age is accomplished. In the illustration of 1 Corinthians 12 the Body needs all its parts to function properly. Once entry into the Body is attained it is not removed.

Judgment: Our position "in" Christ will never be changed.

5. The Family Argument

This proposal argues that the new birth is like the physical birth in that it only happens once.

Exhibit #1: Entry into the family of God is through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26).

This proposition, like so many others, comes from a direct statement in the Word of God. Entry occurs, through faith, in the object of the faith, Christ Jesus.

As previously stated, faith is a non-meritorious act, which means that all the importance and power is in the object of the faith, not the one having it. If your faith is in yourself, it is possible to become so deceived that you think you can wave your arms up and down like a bird and fly from one mountaintop to another. It is

evident that will not happen, not because of a lack of faith but because the object lacks the power to accomplish the desired act. The “power” of faith is based on the power of the object. The object of faith is Christ Jesus who conquered sin and death and has the power to save.

Exhibit #2: Physical birth only happens once, which Christ Himself uses as an analogy of entry into God’s family (John 3:1-21). In the analogy that Jesus used to teach Nicodemus about salvation he spoke of a man’s need to be “born again” (John 3:3,5). Nicodemus did not understand the statement (3:4). In the illustration, Jesus compares physical birth to spiritual birth. As a person can only be born physically one time, it follows that He was referring to being “spiritually” born one time (3:6-8).

Jesus then went on to explain that the spiritual birth takes place by faith in Him (3:15-18) and that most of humanity will not believe (3:19-21).

If man could die spiritually after spiritual birth then there would be a need to be born again and again, but this is not the case.

Judgment: As physical birth occurs only once, so also does spiritual birth.

6. The Essence of God Argument

This proposal argues that the ten characteristics of God are also evidence of the assurance of salvation.

Exhibit #1: God is Sovereign, meaning He is King and as King He has authority to establish conditions and grant eternal life to those who meet the conditions (John 17:2-3; 2 Pet 3:9; Eph 1:5-7; Rom 8:28-32).

Exhibit #2: His Love was the motivator to provide salvation to those who were yet His enemies. It is easier to keep a Believer saved than to get a person saved (Rom 5:10; Rom 8:38-39; John 3:16).

Exhibit #3: His unchanging nature, His Immutability, will keep His promises even if Believers do not keep theirs (2 Tim 2:13; John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35-37; 10:27-30).

Exhibit #4: His Truthfulness (Veracity) stands behind anything He says, including the offer of salvation (Titus 1:1-2).

Exhibit #5: The fact that He is all-powerful (Omnipotent) teaches that there is no power strong enough to break that which He holds in place, which includes the security of the Believer (John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 1 Pet 1:3-5; Jude 1).

Exhibit #6: The fact that He is all-knowing (Omniscient) means that He knows when true belief occurs and will never forget that time or person (Acts 15:8; John 10:14).

Exhibit #7: The fact that He is everywhere at the same time with the same intensity (Omnipresent) means that Believers can never go somewhere He is not. He will never lose His family (Psa 139:7-10).

Exhibit #8: The fact that He is absolute Righteousness means that He always makes the right decision, speaks words of Truth and does the right thing. If He were to make a promise and then not keep the promise, He would be unrighteous (Rom 4:3-8; Psa 32:2).

Exhibit #9: Since God is Eternal Life, He can give that life to others. Nothing can give what it does not possess or have the authority to give (John 3:14-16; 4:13-14; 5:24; 6:39-40,47; 10:28-30).

Exhibit #10: God is absolutely Just which means that He always carries out that which His Righteousness demands. Since all the sins of the world have been paid for, He is Just to forgive anyone who believes in the One who paid for them (1 John 2:2).

Judgment: Assurance of eternal salvation from the penalty for sin agrees with the totality of God’s Essence.

7. The Character Argument

This proposal argues from the fact that God will keep His promises because of His integrity.

Exhibit #1: Believers can deny Him, but He cannot deny eternal salvation to a Believer since He will not break a promise (2 Tim 2:13).

In this passage the “we” are Believers including the apostle Paul. As Believers we sometimes sin (1 John 1:8,10) and can fail to trust in Jesus Christ because we are still weak humans. He on the other hand is God. When He makes a promise, He keeps it. So if He says believe in His Son and we do, then keeping the promise of eternal life is based on His character and not ours.

Exhibit #2: He can deny us some eternal blessings (2 Tim 2:12).

This is also compatible with His character. He told His children that there are rewards above the normal blessings of heaven. Even though sins are paid for and Believers have been eternally forgiven, God's character still despises sin. After all, sins put His Son on a cross.

Judgment: God will keep His promises.

8. The Argument from Christ's Session at the Right Hand of the Father

This proposal argues from considering Christ's present ministry from heaven. Christ's “session” began when He ascended to the right hand of the Father after His resurrection (Col 3:1). He is the defense attorney concerning any charges Satan may bring against the Believer (Rev 12:10).

Exhibit #1: Jesus is an Advocate for Believers with the Father (1 John 2:1-2; Rev 12:10).

An advocate is a “defense attorney.” This means that for the Believer, Jesus Christ is their defense attorney in the courtroom of God. Satan is an “accuser of the brethren” (Rev 12:10) so Believers need one who will defend them concerning sins committed. Consider that if Jesus is defending the Believer concerning sin, and since He paid for them, how could sin(s) cost us our salvation since they are already paid?

Exhibit #2: Jesus is the Believer's Mediator which means He is “in-the-middle” between God and man (Gal 3:20; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).

He is perfect for that ministry because He is equal with both, being both God and man. As the God-man He is the perfect agent to represent man before God. Since the personal cost to Jesus was so great, once a person believes and enters His family, it makes no sense to give part of His family away.

Exhibit #3: Jesus is an Intercessor for His elect (Rom 8:31-35).

Christ Himself was “elected to service” and His election is the most important. As Believers we are “in Him” and the greatest intercessor in history intervenes for His family members that sin. He is the One who steps into the battle to defend the Believer and He does not permit God's love to depart from the Believer.

Judgment: Jesus' present ministry is intercession for the saints.

9. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit Argument

This proposal argues that the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation is permanent.

Exhibit #1: The Holy Spirit regenerates and since the new creation is born of incorruptible seed, it cannot die (1 Cor 15:42, 52; 1 Pet 1:22-25; John 11:25-26).

Exhibit #2: The Holy Spirit indwells the Believer at salvation as a pledge for a resurrection body (Rom 8:9; 1 John 2:27; 2 Cor 1:22).

Exhibit #3: The Holy Spirit baptizes the Believer into union with Christ (Rom 8:9; 1 John 2:27).

Exhibit #4: The Holy Spirit seals the Believer for the Day of Redemption (2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30).

Judgment: The Holy Spirit guarantees eternal salvation for those who believe.

10. The Logical Argument

This proposal argues in a logical way for the assurance of eternal salvation.

Exhibit #1: If salvation is by grace through faith, then works are ruled out as a means of either security or eternal salvation (Eph 2:8-10).

Ephesians offers a direct statement that salvation is not of works. Salvation is all about God's provision, not about what we have done to earn it. Works are important to the Christian life, but only as an outgrowth of being a Christian, not to become or remain one.

Exhibit #2: If the "new birth" constitutes those who believe in Christ as "sons" of God, then failures cannot change the position of the Father (John 1:12-13).

The "new birth" described by John in his gospel is accomplished by faith in Jesus Christ. It is not accomplished by genetic birthright (blood), nor by a sinful/selfish choice to save oneself (will of the flesh), nor simply by man's will to save himself. God brings about the "new birth" for those who believe in the Son.

Exhibit #3: If God did the most for those who believe while His enemies, would He do less now for His children and remove their salvation (Rom 5:9-10)?

This is another example of logical reasoning since it moves from the greater to the smaller. The most difficult thing God could do for humanity was to provide a means of salvation. Scripture refers to salvation requiring the "arm" of God while creation of the heavens is described as His "finger work" (Isa 59:16; Psa 8:3). It is clear that the most "difficult" thing for God to do was to provide salvation since that cost Him His Son. To keep a Believer eternally saved, by comparison, is a very small matter.

Exhibit #4: The "Parable of the Prodigal Son" is a clear illustration of the Security of the Believer (Luke 15:11-32).

One son took his inheritance early and wasted it all. He then realized what he had done and returned to his father, thinking that he had been disowned. Instead, the father welcomed him home. The son no longer had his inheritance, but he had not lost his sonship. Once a "son" through the new birth, that relationship can no longer be lost.

Judgment: Keeping someone saved is not as big a problem as providing their salvation.

11. The Greek Tense Argument

This proposal argues from the grammatical tenses used in the Greek language that also reveal that salvation from the penalty for sin is a onetime act and permanent.

Exhibit #1: The word "believe" in Acts 16:31⁵¹ is found in the Aorist tense which denotes the point of time of belief. It is not action extended over a long period of time.

This pertains to the point of time in which a person by faith accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. All those who do so will be saved.

Exhibit #2: A person declared righteous through faith in Jesus Christ has a permanent introduction into God's grace and a permanent standing before Him (Rom 5:1-2).⁵²

⁵¹ **Acts 16:31** Believe [Aorist Active Indicative PISTEUO = Aorist is a point of time, Active means initiated by the subject, and Indicative is the fact of belief.] in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household.

⁵² **Rom 5:1-2** Therefore [OUN = conclusion drawn from Chapters 3 & 4], having been justified [Aorist Passive Participle DIKAIOW = as a prerequisite to peace] by faith [the basis of justification], we have [Present Active Indicative ECHW = as a present reality] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom [Jesus Christ] also we have obtained [Perfect Active Indicative ECHW = we have with lasting results] our introduction [PROSAGOGE = a bringing before the face of; introduction] by faith into this grace in which we stand [Perfect Active Indicative HISTEMI = stand with lasting results]; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1 established a condition for being declared righteous which is by faith in Jesus Christ. As a result of that faith we have a present peace with God. In Romans 5:2 the Perfect Tense of the Greek word ECHO, meaning to “have,” is used to denote that which is permanently possessed, an introduction into grace which is a permanent “standing” (the Perfect tense of HISTEMI) with God.

Judgment: The original language of the New Testament strengthens the assurance of salvation viewpoint.

12. The Typological Argument

This proposal argues that some Old Testament “types” also portray the security of salvation.

Exhibit #1: Noah's Ark is a picture or “type” of our security because the Lord closed the door and sealed them so they could survive the Flood (1 Pet 3:20-21).

Exhibit #2: The Red Sea Crossing is also a picture of security because they were “baptized” with Moses, although they did not get wet. Moses was a type of Jesus Christ as the Deliverer of His people and not one person perished at the Red Sea (1 Cor 10:1-2).

Judgment: God provided beautiful illustrations of the Believer's security.

13. The Argument from Silence

This proposal is the weakest argument because it does not refer to things said, but instead to things not said.

Exhibit #1: There is no command found anywhere in Scripture to be saved again. A man is to be reborn and birth just happens once.

Exhibit #2: There is no record of anyone being saved more than once or being urged to be saved again. If anyone in Scripture ever needed to be saved again it would be those of the church at Corinth.

Chapter by chapter in 1 Corinthians, their problems were:

- Chapter 1: They divided over the issue of baptism.
- Chapter 2: They did not pursue spiritual things.
- Chapter 3: They distorted eternal rewards.
- Chapter 4: They challenged duly established authority.
- Chapter 5: They permitted flagrant sin.
- Chapter 6: They brought lawsuits against one another.
- Chapter 7: Their marriages were in trouble.
- Chapter 8: They abused their freedom.
- Chapter 9: They abused giving.
- Chapter 10: They abused their spiritual heritage.
- Chapter 11: They distorted the Lord's Table.
- Chapter 12: They did not understand the use of Spiritual Gifts.
- Chapter 13: They were not expressing love.
- Chapter 14: They distorted church government and decorum.
- Chapter 15: They questioned the resurrection.
- Chapter 16: They ran off their pastor—Apollos.

Exhibit #3: Even the Corinthians were still called “saints” (1 Cor 1:2).

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

Judgment: If the Corinthians were not told to be saved again from the penalty for sin, then no one else needs to worry about losing their salvation.

C. Simple Biblical Answers to Frequent Questions About Salvation

1. A Roman Jailer Once Asked the Apostle Paul, “What Must I Do To Be Saved?” (Acts 16:30-31)

And after he [the jailer] brought them out, he said, “Sirs [Paul and Silas], what must I do to be saved?”³¹ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.”

2. What Does One Have to Believe About Jesus Christ? (1 Cor 15:3-8)

For I [Paul] delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸ and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

3. Can a Person Know They Are Saved? (1 John 5:13)

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

4. What Did God Promise to Those Who Believed in Jesus Christ? (John 3:16-18, 36)

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; He who does not believe has been judged already, because He has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him.

5. Can the Good Deeds We Do Save Us? (Titus 3:4-7)

But when the kindness of God our savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our savior, ⁷ that being justified by His Grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

6. So Then, How Are We Saved? (Eph 2:8-9)

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

7. Since God Loved Us When We Were Sinners, Why Would He Love Us Less Now That We Are His Children? (Rom 5:8-10)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

8. Is There any Condemnation for Those Who Believe in Jesus Christ? (Rom 8:1-2)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

9. Can Anything Separate Us from Christ's Love? (Rom 8:35-39)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "For thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

10. What About When We Are Unfaithful to Him? (2 Tim 2:13)

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.

11. When We Physically Die, Are We Alive Forever with Christ? (John 11:25-26)

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in Me shall live even if He dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

The question initially asked in this chapter, “What are the arguments for the eternal security of the Believer?” was answered through a series of reasonable arguments that are presented from the Scriptures themselves. Hopefully these arguments will provide **Assurance**, as seen on the chart, to Believers so they may be free to live in confident expectation of eternity and serve Him out of thanksgiving.

It is clear from God’s Word that humans can know beyond any reasonable doubt where they will spend eternity. That knowledge should lead to comfort of soul and courage to live life for Him.

This leads us to the next chapter which will begin to explore the standards set by the Creator that please Him. We will pursue answers to the question, “How should I live?”

For Personal Preparation:

- ✓ **Discuss the issues of Predestination and Election as proposed by the Calvinist viewpoint toward salvation.**
- ✓ **What is your favorite argument for the security of the Believer and why?**
- ✓ **How would you answer the objection to the evidence for the security of salvation that if the Believer cannot lose his salvation, he will just become an unrepentant sinner?** (This is mostly just for thought at this point. It will be answered in depth as you continue to study.)

Chapter 10

Change According to the Will of God and Divine Discipline

Change According to the Will of God and Divine Discipline

What Standards Did the Creator Prescribe?

(See Chart)

As we remember that the Creator communicated to His creation clearly and accurately through a written record we can seek His will with **Humility** of soul knowing that the **Truth** is available to us. This is living on the **God Line** of the chart. If we choose to follow or live on the **Matter Line** of the chart we have been **Deceived** and the result is **Anger, Fear, and Guilt** that we cannot explain. A change of mind is needed if one is living on the **Matter Line** to return to the **God Line**, in order to grow spiritually. The fact that we know our eternal destiny, through acceptance of verified **Truth**, leads us to serve the Creator out of thanksgiving instead of trying to gain salvation through works. The works should come after we are saved. God has planned the works for us since before humanity existed (Eph 2:8-10).

Acting as the Sovereign King, our Creator established the standards necessary for eternal salvation from the penalty for sin. As has been shown, this saving faith is a one-time event that places trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He also prescribes standards for those who want salvation from the power of sin. This is known as the Christian life and recognizes the ongoing battle between the Sin Nature, which is still present in the Believer (Rom 7:17), and the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16-23). The Sin Nature is the inherent sin in mankind that is the result of Adam's fall (Rom 5:12). This battle wages daily and will exist until physical death or the Rapture.

God wants deliverance from the power of sin for every Believer during this life. This requires learning and living His Word. His Word provides information to us about how He functions. We are called to learn about Him in order to know what is pleasing to Him (2 Cor 5:9).

A. The Will of God

1. Introduction

God is a personal being who has the perfect ability to make decisions. Prior to His creation of angels and man, He decided how He would deal with these new creatures that He knew would sin and need grace (Eph 1:3-4; 1 Pet 1:18-21). The result was a plan that included giving the creatures volition (the ability to choose) so that they would be responsible for their decisions and could then honestly return His love (1 John 4:19), defining sin (Rom 4:15), and redeeming them from their fallen condition (1 John 2:2).

2. Definitions

One of the key problems to understanding the Will of God is the differing definitions used to describe the acts of God. Often students use these terms interchangeably and lose sight of the distinctive differences described by the Word. Please consider the definitions of the different areas of God's Will.

a. The Sovereign Will of God:

This refers to His control of human history, where He functions as a King who makes the rules and penalties, exacting justice when and how He determines, and overruling the physical laws as He chooses. God's Sovereign Will includes the standards to receive His grace gift of salvation (Rom 9:15-18) and distribute Spiritual Gifts as He chooses (1 Cor 12:11).

b. The Directive Will of God:

This refers to principles prescribed by God (1 Tim 1:8-10), or things that we ought to do. It includes God's desire for His creation to love and not sin (1 Cor 13), namely to display virtue instead of transgression. It describes what pleases Him.

c. The Permissive Will of God:

God permits volition to function apart from His Directive Will. His Permissive Will allows human good (decisions not made for the glory of God, but out of selfishness) and evil to function. Scripture tells us there is no evil in God (John 3:20; Jas 1:13; Psalms 5:4). God's Permissive Will is where freedom functions in human activities that are not directly addressed by the Word of God, such as which set of clothing to wear today.

d. The Perfect Will of God:

This occurs when Believers are fully submitted to Him (Rom 12:2), loving Him and others (Mark 12:29-31). It is when the Sovereign, Directive and Permissive Will of God unite in perfect harmony in the Believer's life. His Perfect Will is for all to believe (John 20:30-31).

e. The Overruling Will of God:

This refers to His supernatural intervention in history when God chooses to overrule certain physical "laws" or the actions of certain people without overruling their volition. Examples include the miraculous Exodus from Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14), overruling Balaam's words (Numbers 22), Jonah trying to flee from God (Book of Jonah) plus the miracles of Jesus Christ.

3. A Critical Question Concerns God's Overruling Will. Does He Use It on Those He "Elects?"

To answer this question a proper evaluation of the evidence must be conducted. Proper evaluation of a given issue must involve the accumulation of facts and the analysis of those facts. From those facts, we are able to draw deductions which will lead us to a reasonable conclusion about any given issue.

Fact 1: No one comes to the Son unless the Father "draws" him (John 6:43-47).

Fact 2: The Father handed this authority off to His Son (Luke 10:22).

Fact 3: The Son chose to "draw" all men to Himself with His death on the cross (John 12:31-32).⁵³

Deduction 1: Therefore, the Father has let His Son, "draw all men to Himself."

Fact 4: Through the exercise of free will, humanity is invited to draw near to God (Jas 4:8; Rev 22:17; John 7:17).⁵⁴

Fact 5: The Father's Sovereign Will declares that those who believe in His Son are guaranteed eternal life and those who do not are guaranteed eternal punishment (John 3:36).

Fact 6: His Sovereign Will is for all to be saved and come to a full knowledge of the Truth (1 Tim 2:3-4; 2 Pet 3:9).⁵⁵

Deduction 2: If His Overruling Will were to function apart from His stated requirement of salvation by faith that came from His Sovereign Will, then all humanity would be saved. We know this is not the case.

Deduction 3: If all are saved there would be no need for, nor inhabitants of, the Lake of Fire, and thus all the warnings against it would be useless and deny the statement that "all Scripture is profitable" (Matt 25:41 cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17).

Fact 7: God's Overruling Will concerns possessing the power (Omnipotence) to carry out anything He chooses to do. His Sovereign Will is about revealing His Righteousness and Justice. They must not be confused nor used as substitutes for each other, just as a distinction between His Love and Justice must be maintained.

Deduction 4: Man's "election" then refers to being "called out" for a specific role in history, rather than salvation. It can include salvation but is not limited to it.

Fact 8: The words for "election" (the Greek verb, EKLEGO, and the noun, EKLEKTOS, are compound words meaning to "speak out of the midst," or "spoken out of the midst") are not inherently technical (with a specific,

⁵³ **John 12:31-32** "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth [the cross], will draw [ELKUW = exerted a force upon; note that it is the same word used in John 6:44] all men to Myself."

⁵⁴ **Jas 4:8** Draw [EGGIDZW = stop resisting the "force" and get closer] near to God and He will draw [EGGIDZW] near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **Rev 22:17** The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes [THELW = to desire, to will, decide] take the water of life without cost. **John 7:17** If anyone is willing [THELW] to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

⁵⁵ **1 Tim 2:3-4** This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires [THELW] all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. **2 Pet 3:9** The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing [BOULOMAI = to deliberately will something; differs from THELW which emphasizes the desire] for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

limited meaning), thus to make them technical in a specific verse is to “read our thoughts into” Scripture rather than “read the author’s meaning out of” Scripture (1 Cor 1:26-29).⁵⁶

Fact 9: Divine “election” is clearly used in places that are not a description of eternal salvation. If “election” equals “salvation,” then all of Israel is saved apart from their decision about the Lord (Acts 13:17), and Judas was “saved” for he too was called “elect” even though translators decided to render the Greek word EKLEKTOS as “chosen” in most translations (John 6:70 & Luke 6:13-16).

Fact 10: God’s Directive Will for humanity is to believe in the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah (1 Cor 15:1-4).

Deduction 5: God’s Permissive Will allows His creatures to choose against Him. His Perfect Will for His creatures is to believe in His Son, which places the responsibility for decisions on each person (John 3:18).

Deduction 6: Those who reject the Son, by failing to have faith in Jesus Christ, throughout the course of their lives have blasphemed the Holy Spirit by calling Him a liar, and will face the consequences of the unpardonable sin (Luke 12:10; 1 John 5:10-13).

4. **The Plan of God** (His Plan Includes All Areas of His Will as Demonstrated by Acts 2:22-24)
Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – ²³ this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. ²⁴ But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

- God’s Overruling Will is seen in the miracles of Jesus, (who was a miracle in Himself through the Virgin Birth) and His resurrection from the dead.
- God’s Sovereign Will is seen in sending a Messiah to pay the penalty for sin.
- God’s Directive Will is displayed by laying out the requirements for the Messiah and specifying the standards of Righteousness by which to evaluate Him.
- God’s Permissive Will is seen in permitting sin and evil to function to the point of crucifying an innocent man. God did not overrule the volition of anyone, nor prescribe man to sin, however His plan was carried out.
- God’s Perfect Will is seen in the person of His Son, fully submitted to the Father’s Sovereign and Directive Will and functioning in love through all of it.

5. **God’s Omniscience, Including His Foreknowledge, Selected a Plan in Eternity Past that Knew Who Would Subscribe to His Sovereign Decisions and Directive Will** (1 Pet 1:1-2; Rom 8:28-30).

God’s Omniscience as it relates to the history of the Angelic Conflict is the only thing still to prove. All other elements of His Essence were clearly proven by the Cross of Jesus Christ and His Resurrection. On the cross of Jesus the Messiah, God’s love was displayed and His Righteousness and Justice were satisfied. Eternal Life was displayed in Jesus rising from the dead as well as His power. God’s unchangeable nature did what He had earlier prophesied, therefore showing that He is Truth. God has proclaimed through His prophets many other events that are still to be fulfilled. His Omniscience is the only thing left to be fully proven through the completion of His prophetic Word.

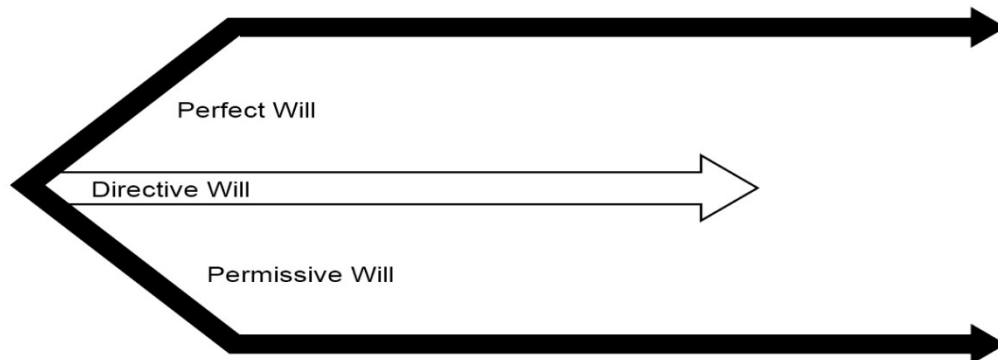
An example of His Omniscience that is awaiting fulfillment is found in the Book of Revelation. There exists a book that contains the names of all who would live, called the “Book of Life.” Those who die in unbelief will be erased from that book (Rev 3:5). Those who are erased from the “Book of Life” will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:12-15). There is another book called “The Lamb’s Book of Life,” where the names of Believers were written before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8; 17:8; 21:27). At the end of the

⁵⁶ [A clear example of the non-technical meaning of the word is found in] **1 Cor 1:26-29** For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no man may boast before God.

Millennium, at the Great White Throne, the books will balance. Therefore, at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Php 2:10-11) and one day every knee will bow (Rom 14:10-12).

The Plan of God

Sovereign & Overruling Will



The Chart above is an overview of the descriptions of God's Will working in His Plan of the Ages to bring about resolution in the Angelic Conflict. You may need to refer to the chart while studying the following points.

B. The Will of Man (Decision-Making)

1. The Source

God possesses the perfect ability to make decisions and He decided to make humanity in His own image. Humanity therefore has the ability to make decisions, although not the ability to decide perfectly every time (Gen 1:26).⁵⁷

2. Accountability

Humanity is accountable to the Creator for any decisions (Rom 1:18-23). The inherent ability for humanity to choose is clearly revealed in a variety of ways. Frequently these choices are referred to as "Volition." By definition, "Volition is an act of making a choice or decision; also, a choice or decision made." It includes "the power of choosing or determining," thus, it refers to mankind's "will"⁵⁸ (John 1:12-13).⁵⁹

⁵⁷ **Gen 1:26** Then God said [This verb is a 3rd person, masculine singular denoting one God], "Let Us [This is a plural but is identified by the Singular used with the term "ELOHIM" meaning "God." The plural refers to the Trinity.] make man [singular ADAM can refer to one man or to mankind, which is identified later in the verse] in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule [3rd masculine plural that is connected to ADAM, so here it means "mankind" and not just one man] over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

⁵⁸ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/volition>, June 20, 2020

⁵⁹ Many will ask a question about **John 1:12-13** which says "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name [this defines those who received him],¹³ who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." One cannot decide through an act of volition that they are saved, and be saved. Rather, one must believe in the One who will save when He is believed. This verse is saying that no one can save himself by an act of will by believing in anything/anyone else.

3. Vocabulary

Many Biblical words denote the ability to decide. Faith (Greek PISTOS) indicates a decision has been made concerning who or what a person believes. Believe (Greek PISTEUO) is simply the verb form of faith and is the act of deciding upon an object of faith. The word “repent” (Greek METANOIA) literally means to “change the mind” thus requiring a volitional decision to stop one belief to adopt another. The word for testing (Greek PEIRASMOS and verb PEIRADZO) both mean to “test” or “tempt,” depending on context, and indicates that a choice needs to be made, either for good or for evil. God tests humanity to do good things and Satan tempts humanity to sin and evil.

Every command found in Scripture requires a decision on the part of the recipient(s) as to whether or not to obey it. In fact the first command given to Adam was a test of his obedience through choice (Gen 2:15-17; 3:1-6). A command to believe therefore requires a decision (1 John 3:23).

Good decisions include attitudes and actions that are called righteous (Greek word DIKAIOS). Bad decisions also involve attitudes and actions, and are called inherent evil (Greek word KAKOS).

4. Freedom to Choose

Believers have the freedom to choose, either to do divine good or to sin (Gal 5:1) whereas unbelievers only have choices to produce different kinds of human good or sin (Eph 2:1-3).

The choices a person makes are of extreme importance to time and eternity (Josh 24:15). This principle was taught under the Mosaic Law to the Jews (Deut 30:19-20) and also to The Church (Eph 6:1-3).

5. Absolute Standards

Some choices are absolutely good and others absolutely bad as evidenced by the Greek word KALOS meaning “inherently good” and KAKOS meaning “inherently bad.”⁶⁰ Where God speaks concerning specific thoughts, speech, and actions He defines what is absolutely good and absolutely bad. This would include all that He has revealed about Himself, His Son, the Holy Spirit, His Plan, eternal judgment, and moral issues, just to mention a few of the topics. Any thought, speech or action not in compliance with His standards is not pleasing in His sight while any thought, speech or action that complies with His standards or gives praise to His Name is pleasing in His sight. It should be our objective to do **“that which is pleasing in His sight,”** knowing that one day even Believers will give an account as to their battle with the power of sin in their lives (2 Cor 5:9-10).

An absolute standard for purposes of comparison is required to determine which decisions are righteous and which are evil, for without an absolute standard, what remains is purely opinion. Absolute standards are revealed in the inspired Word of God (2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12). Various authorities, depending upon their individual society have been given the power by God to establish laws. These laws should not contradict God’s laws that are established for particular periods of time (known as Dispensations that are distinguished by a different Biblical priesthood [Heb 7:12]). This principle is evidenced by the orders to obey the laws of the land in which you are living, unless they contradict the laws of God (Rom 13:1-7). Where the Scripture does not set an absolute standard there is freedom in thought, speech, and action (Rom 4:15; 5:13).

6. Violations of Absolutes

There are many lists of sins found in the New Testament that are absolutely not pleasing in the sight of the Lord (Mark 7:21-23; Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Col 3:5-11; 1 Pet 2:1; Rev 21:8). A careful examination of each context of those passages indicates that Believers can and do commit these sins. They need to confess them to God and seek to correct the error where possible. While their sins will not cost them eternal life, the sins will cost eternal rewards that Believers could have received were the time not wasted with sin (the entire subject of eternal rewards will be considered later). Sin in the life of the Believer fails to “redeem the time,” and thus violates a principle established by God (Eph 5:15-16). These choices involve deliverance from the power of sin, which is another form of “salvation” for the Christian (1 Pet 2:1-2).

7. Salvation Through Obedience

Salvation from the penalty for sin through faith in Jesus the Messiah is righteous (obedience to a law) and the best decision possible. The effect is guaranteed eternal redemption from the penalty for sin (Rom 3:22-24; Col 1:13-14).

⁶⁰ W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 1989

Any suffering received for choosing to follow Christ in attitude, speech or actions is undeserved (1 Pet 4:12-16) because it is clearly not discipline for sin. Undeserved suffering is a common part of the Christian life which should be expected. The Lord told us that our relationship to Him would bring hatred from the world (John 15:18).

8. Relative Issues

Some choices are determined to be good or bad as they relate to the circumstances of life. These decisions are relatively good or relatively bad as evidenced by the Greek word AGATHOS meaning good in its effect, and the Greek word PONEROS meaning bad in its effect.⁶¹ The “good” choices can include good, better or best, while the “bad” choices include bad, worse or worst (Gal 5:13-15, 16-23). Relative decisions cover areas that are not specifically addressed by Scripture such as a person’s vocation, hygiene, diet, clothing, shelter, economics, and personal preferences in general.

9. Lawful Versus Profitable

The Apostle Paul taught the importance of evaluating decisions under the principle of “lawful vs profitable” (1 Cor 6:12-13; 10:23-31). The Christian today is no longer under the Mosaic Law with its commands and penalties but is under grace (Rom 6:12-15), so in a sense “all things are lawful.” In contrast, “*we know the Law is good if one uses it lawfully* (1 Tim 1:8-11)” which means that the Law is valuable to identify sin, when properly understood, concerning moral issues. The example Paul uses concerns food. While there were multiple dietary laws, starting in the Garden of Eden and then under the Law of Moses, The Church Age has no such dietary laws. Therefore, it is “lawful” to eat anything one chooses to eat (Mark 7:18-19; Acts 10:9-16; Rom 14:20). However, one should not eat if it causes a brother to stumble, for that is not “profitable.”

10. From Bad Decisions to the Worst Decisions

If bad choices are not stopped, they can proceed to future choices that are worse than the first decision, and eventually end in the worst decision. Judas made a bad decision to betray the Lord and went to the chief priests to make an agreement (Matt 26:14-16). Jesus knew all along who would betray Him and in fact warned Judas not to go through with the betrayal. But Judas made a worse decision which was to go through with his first bad choice (John 6:64; Luke 22:21-22). The worst decision Judas made was to hang himself. This was possibly at the very time Jesus was paying for his sins on the cross (Matt 27:3-5).

Another illustration is when a person chooses to eat a lot of sugar over a long period of time and then becomes diabetic. The consumption of a lot of processed sugar is a bad decision because it is known to be unhealthy. If a person knows they are diabetic and still consumes a lot of processed sugar, those decisions are worse. The worst decision, after having diabetes related health issues, is continuing the consumption of the sugar which can result in loss of eyesight, limbs or even death. Sugar is not prohibited by the Word of God, but wisdom is certainly needed concerning its intake.

Relatively bad choices are evaluated on the basis of the action, or lack of action, that is taken. Bad choices can be conscious or unconscious, with malicious intent or without as described in the “Parable of the Faithful Steward” who did not know what to do (Luke 12:47-48). Any suffering received from bad choices that are a result of sin is deserved (Heb 10:29). Everyone’s life contains a mixture of deserved and undeserved suffering while seeking to live as a Christian and make adjustments in areas of failure.

11. From Good Decisions to the Best Decisions

A good choice involves the action, or lack of (like patience), that is based on principles found in the Word of God. Good choices are those that consider the intent behind the choice (Heb 4:12). Information concerning God’s desires is frequently the difference between good and bad choices which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter (2 Tim 2:15).

Making choices that God desires are what produces “fruit,” which will be rewarded for eternity as part of the inheritance given to Believers as adopted sons of God (1 Pet 3:8-12).

Choices should be empowered by divine knowledge, willingness to submit to divine viewpoint (agreement with God’s thoughts), availability to serve, and ability to perform through a Believer’s Spiritual Gift (2 Pet 3:14-18). All too frequently, choices are made from the passions of the flesh so they most often are driven by personal preferences and opinions that are empty of divine viewpoint (Matt 15:7-9).

⁶¹ W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 1989

It is a good choice to believe that God exists, but that belief alone is not good enough to partake of the payment for the penalty for sins and be saved (Jas 2:19). It is a better choice to search the Scriptures for the evidence that Jesus is the Messiah, but by itself it is still not enough to be saved from the penalty for sin (John 5:39-40). The best choice is to believe the absolute standard which is faith in Christ Jesus and so gain eternal life with God (John 3:16-18).

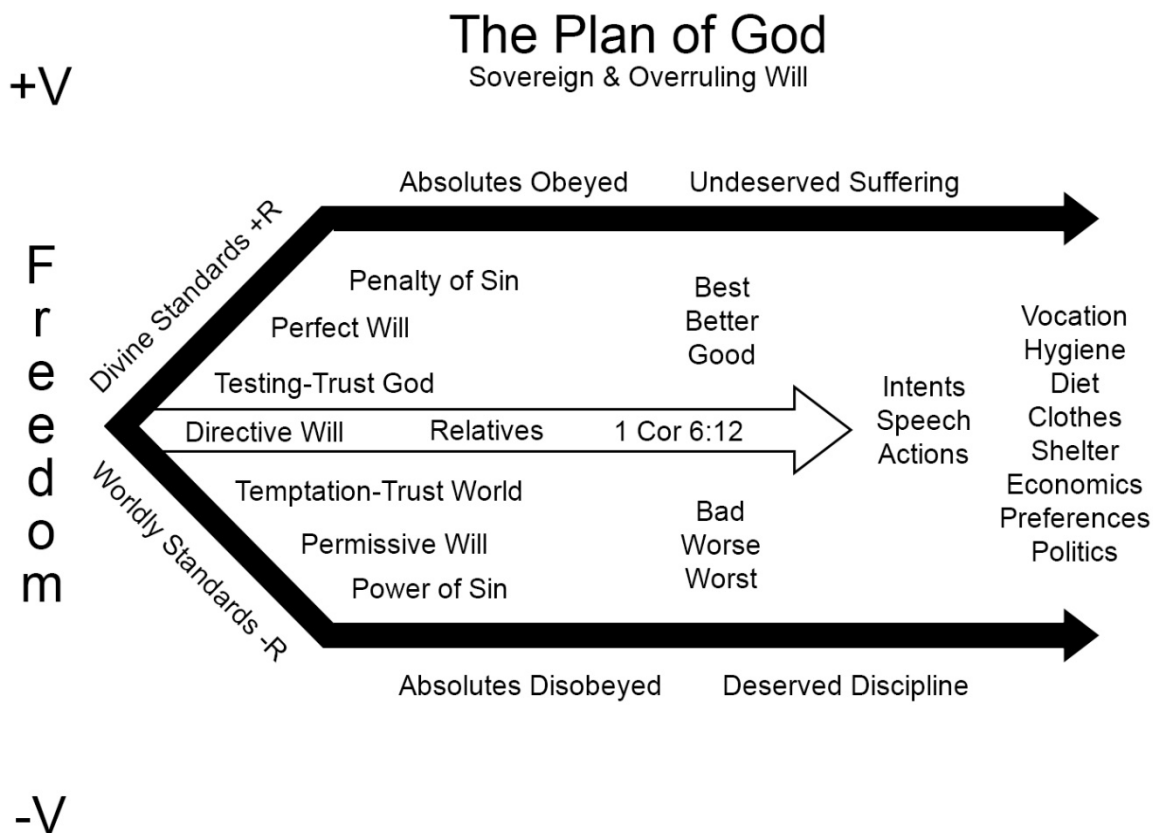
12. The Sin of Judging

We often judge the choices of others, as to whether they are good or bad, based on our own standards. If our standards do not align with divine standards then our judging is sinful (Matt 7:1-2). In the absolute standards, as defined by the Word of God, we are actually called upon to judge (1 Cor 6:1-3), but in the relative issues of life we are not to judge unless a duly established authority orders us to make a decision (1 Pet 2:13-15). For example, if a government has made a law that is not covered by God's Word, like a traffic law, and we are called to make a decision concerning the guilt or innocence of the person accused of violating that law.

13. Your Life

Each Believer is the result of all the choices, both good and bad, they have made during this life. One great thing about being a Believer is that if you make the best choice, which is to love God, He will work all your decisions together for good (Rom 8:28).

The chart below has the symbol "+V" and "-V". This refers to Positive Volition and Negative Volition. Positive Volition refers to decisions made in obedience to God and Negative Volition refers to decisions made in disobedience to God. When all these principles are applied the chart now looks like this:



C. The Role of Divine Discipline

1. The Importance of Understanding Divine Discipline

Divine Discipline is a topic often overlooked by students of the Word. There are many reasons that it goes unnoticed, but if a person sees only the tender side of God's love, they forget that love is also righteous, and therefore discipline at times must be administered toward a beloved child.

2. Discipline from God (For the Correction of Disobedience)

The discipline considered in this section is that which comes from God and thus it will be called "Divine Discipline." Divine Discipline can be poured out on not just the unbeliever (like the Flood of Noah and the; uses human governments or agents to administer the discipline (Rom 13:1-7) and when that nation fails to administer it properly, that nation receives discipline.

3. Discipline that Comes from the World

There is a type of discipline that comes from the world for violation of its standards and laws. This discipline is seen as suffering and it can be deserved or undeserved. The Apostle Peter writes about the different types of suffering, saying,

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you [Believers located in various regions of the Roman Empire; cf. 1:1], which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the [undeserved] sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ By no means let any of you [deservedly] suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but if anyone suffers [undeservedly] as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? ¹⁹ Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (1 Pet 4:12-19)

4. Do Believers Sin?

Scripture clearly states that Believers still sin. When the Apostle John uses the pronoun "we" in 1 John 1:8-10,⁶² he is including himself. John is clearly already saved from the penalty for sin, but finds there is still a battle against the power of sin.

There are a multitude of passages in the New Testament that are clearly addressed to Believers that address and list personal sins to conquer and avoid (Col 3:5-10 et al.). As has been shown, salvation from the penalty for sin cannot be lost, but Believers can and do lose battles to the power of sin.

5. How Do Believers Battle the Power of Sin?

God has given to Believers a means by which to battle the power of sin in their lives when they realize they have committed a sin.

When sin(s) is identified in our life, it is to be confessed to God for the purpose of being restored to fellowship with Him (1 John 1:5-9), seeking to conquer that sin (1 John 2:1). If we do not confess our sins, we are subject to Divine Discipline at that moment and onward until there is confession.

As a gracious God who is faithful to us, even if we are unfaithful, He wants us to overcome the power of sin in our lives, now that the penalty has been forgiven. He disciplines us out of love (Rev 3:19-22), seeking to get us to walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord (Eph 4:1; Php 1:27; Col 1:10; 1 Thes 2:12).

6. What Forms Can the Discipline Take?

God's discipline can take many forms. It frequently begins in a mild manner with a loss of peace of mind, or fear, or some other mental confusion through the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). It can

⁶² 1 John 1:8-10 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

progress through various stages of intensity and even end in death (1 John 5:16-17) if no confession or adjustments are made. In Leviticus 26, the Jews were warned of five cycles of discipline that would end in destruction of their nation if they did not become obedient to the Lord. The principle of intensification of discipline for an unrepentant lifestyle is valid for everyone, although the interpretation is specific for Israel.

7. Some Examples of Divine Discipline

Divine Discipline is first seen in the Garden of Eden when God expelled Adam and Eve for disobedience. The discipline was actually for man's benefit (Gen 3:22-24). The Patriarch Job was actually given some good advice from Eliphaz who told him to "*not despise the discipline of the Almighty* (Job 5:17)," but that comment also shows us how easy it is for us to judge other people's circumstances as discipline, when the circumstances may just be a test. Almost every decision humanity is called upon to make is both a test and a temptation, either to choose to do the right thing in God's eyes or choose to do the wrong thing. The Greek word PEIRADZO is translated both "test" and "tempt" depending on the context. We must be careful to not assume that because a person is undergoing difficulty in their lives that they are under Divine Discipline, for it may just be undeserved suffering.

The Jews, as God's chosen and beloved people, experienced Divine Discipline from the beginning of their nation (Deut 4:35-36; 8:1-6; 11:1-7). The Book of Proverbs is loaded with the wisdom of embracing discipline, learning from it, making the needed adjustments to attitudes, speech, and actions and embracing it as an important part of life. This is how mature Believers live (Prov 3:11-12; 6:20-23; 12:1; 13:1,18,24; 15:5,10,31-33; 19:27). A primary characteristic of wickedness is to hate discipline (Psa 50:16-21). Fathers are in fact called upon to be the one who administers discipline to the children in a household (Prov 22:15; 23:13-14; Eph 6:4; Prov 19:18-21), but the discipline is to be done out of love (Eph 6:4).

8. Why Are Believers Disciplined?

Discipline is the effect of a cause, known as "sowing" and "reaping." One who lives for worldly pursuits will reap discipline for such pursuits (Prov 22:6; Hos 10:12; Gal 6:6-10; 2 Cor 9:6-7).

The writer of the Book of Hebrews was inspired to write a section of Scripture about the importance of Divine Discipline in the life of the Believer. He says,

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵ and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; ⁶ For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives. ⁷ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. ¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. ¹² Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. (Heb 12:4-13)

Divine Discipline is designed not only to teach Believers about sin, but also to see the righteous love of the Living God. God uses it to steer the life of the Believer and therefore is for our benefit. It is beneficial when it is viewed as valuable and not simply punitive (painful).

9. Does Divine Discipline Lead to a Loss of Salvation from the Penalty for Sin?

As we come to understand Divine Discipline in the life of the Believer, some passages that seem to indicate a Believer can lose salvation appear. When an individual reads passages like Hebrews 6:4-8 in the context of the power of sin, it is then capable of being accurately understood, because it is consistent with other Scripture.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit [they are clearly Believers], ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come [they are not baby

Believers but have a level of maturity], ⁶ and then have fallen away, it is impossible **[with God nothing is impossible. cf. Matt 19:26 & Mark 10:27 & Luke 18:27 so it is impossible for man to do anything towards their repentance]** to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame **[They have reached a level of turning from God where nothing can be humanly done to bring them back. Therefore, they need to be turned over to God and left alone].** ⁷ For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; ⁸ but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned **[Divine Discipline of the most severe kind, but not loss of salvation from the penalty for sin].** (Heb 6:4-8)

Another passage frequently cited is Hebrews 10:26-31. It is a great passage to teach the importance of interpretation in context. It says,

*For if we **[Believers]** go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins **[in the immediate context are the sacrifices made under the Levitical Priesthood, which are no longer valid after the sacrifice of Christ. See 10:1-14. Therefore, in context the writer is referring to the Levitical Sacrifices, which are no longer required from God because of Christ's sacrifice. The Jews had come to believe that the sacrifices themselves are what protected them and provided their salvation, although the sacrifices never did. The writer is telling the Jewish Believers that no longer can they offer sacrifices thinking that action will satisfy the righteousness of God],** ²⁷ but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment **[for a Believer who willingly and knowingly disobeys God]**, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." ³¹ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. **[Believers do not have a license to sin. The Divine Discipline can be severe enough that physical death is administered (1 Pet 4:15-16)].** (Heb 10:26-31)*

10. Observations About Divine Discipline

Divine Discipline has both punitive and instructive features. Punitive Discipline is deserved suffering which include the painful effect of sin(s). Instructive Discipline is the ongoing testing through undeserved suffering that is designed to teach self-discipline so the Believer may learn to live a righteous life (Heb 5:12-14). When Believers begin to live like an unbeliever, the discipline is often self-induced and becomes a form of slavery (Gal 4:8-11).

a. Punitive discipline:

Punitive discipline frequently involves pain, which can be either mental or physical. It is a clear indicator that a spiritual adjustment is in order. Punitive discipline may be the result of sowing corruption and therefore reaping corruption (Gal 6:7-10). Corruption involves thoughts, speech, and actions that are personally destructive to self or to others. Punitive discipline can be removed by one with authority to pardon, like when a government leader pardons a crime. Although punitive discipline can and might be removed, often the scars will remain. The Lord may choose to leave the effects of the original corruption as a test to teach endurance (Jas 1:2-4; Rom 5:3-5), or to hamper arrogance (2 Cor 12:7-9). When a person turns to the Lord and loves God through obedience, He will work all of these things together for good (Rom 8:28). The divine discipline can be turned to blessing in various forms.

For example, someone may have had a sexual encounter outside of marriage resulting in a child. The unplanned child is an effect of a sinful cause. With the pregnancy come some tests and temptations. There is the lifelong test to get right with God, bring the child into the world, and seek to raise it in a godly manner. The pregnancy is discipline, but discipline can be turned into blessing. There may be the temptation to abort the child, or not get one's life right with God and raise the child in an ungodly manner. That will lead to more discipline.

Another example is one who might engage in some sort of unnecessary activity that leads to a life-changing injury. Their body may be damaged beyond repair and the rest of their life they will have to

endure the effect of the foolish act. While the suffering is initially deserved, the test again will be to learn to trust God during a life that is now more difficult.

Discipline can also be compounded when different sins surround the same set of tests. Each sin can receive discipline. For example, if a person “murders his brother” through unrighteous mental anger, a sin has been committed. If that anger becomes verbal, another sin is committed and the discipline is doubled. Obviously if the sin of murder is thought, spoken, and then literally carried out a third sin is committed. So there is the possibility of triple discipline for one set of tests (Matt 5:21-22). While there can be varying penalties for the different sins, none of them are pleasing to God (Eph 5:7-11). Difficult circumstances alone do not constitute punitive divine discipline.

b. Instructive discipline:

Life itself is full of difficult circumstances (John 16:33), with each set of circumstances both a test and temptation. It is a test to trust God’s direction while at the same time being tempted to rely on fleshly answers. Even when a test like pride is passed there is the temptation to become prideful about passing the test. While functioning in arrogance there is also the test to lay the sin of arrogance aside and become humble (1 Pet 5:5-6).

A person may have an accident that was not caused by foolish behavior, such as the kind that arises while riding in a car that was involved in a crash. The damage to the person’s body may remain for testing to produce divine good under difficult circumstances.

c. The onset of pain:

While the onset of mental or physical pain is frequently an indicator of punitive discipline, it is not the key standard of evaluation. When a person commits a sin for the first time, there may not be any physical pain that results, but there will probably be some emotional pain due to the compromise of a righteous standard. For example, the more immoral relationships a person participates in, the more that person’s conscience becomes “seared” to the pain. “Scar tissue” develops on the soul (1 Tim 4:1-2), that blocks the pain of guilt associated with the sin. Another example of scar tissue regards an individual who lies for financial gain. They may initially have some sense of guilt, but will feel less guilt about the sin as they continue to practice it. Becoming a person of honesty and character becomes more and more difficult and there is the possibility of falling away from the walk of faith.

In some cultures people believe they have to cheat and lie to others to survive. When this practice is consistently done people no longer realize that the practices are sins and not pleasing to our Lord. A change of mind is required and honorable practices need to be put in place of the dishonorable practices. It is sad that in many cultures politicians view these sinful practices as part of their job.

There may also be some pain associated with doing good works in honor to our Lord (Gal 6:9; Heb 12:3). The Lord Himself felt that pain as He endured this life although betrayed by friends, lied about, and eventually placed on a cross. If our primary means of evaluation of divine discipline is pain, then we may stop doing good to avoid the pain.

d. The deceit of temptation:

It is easy to classify the temptations of man into four categories: fame, fortune, power, and pleasure. The tendency of our fleshly nature is to set goals to achieve one or more of these things through human energy apart from the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Their pursuit is a result of selfishness which the Bible commands us to avoid (Php 2:3-4). When a person accomplishes one of these worldly goals, the immediate result is happiness but since it is not of God it won’t last.

For example, a person may receive a commendation from man, like an award, and feel good for a while, but a feeling of emptiness will eventually set in and another goal will need to be established to gain more recognition (Matt 6:1-5). When what we desire is initially received it is pleasing for a while, but will not lead to a sustained joy as given by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). The reception of the fruit of these temptations is deceitful by nature and can lead to a greedy search for happiness from the world and its things (Eph 4:20-24).

Discipline for receiving the fruit of sinful gain might be an ever-increasing attitude that is not content with anything. If these motivations are left unchecked there will be a hardening of the soul which comes from the deceitfulness of sin that makes it difficult to consume and process the truth (Heb 3:12-13).

e. Parents and children:

Let us first be reminded of the passage in Hebrews, which states that God uses discipline out of love (Heb 12:7-13). Many people seek to answer a complex question like, “Am I (or was I) a good parent?” with a simple “yes” or “no” response. To answer that with a simple “yes” or “no” is not that easy.

It is often not easy to answer those questions because of the definition of “good” that is used. Parents tend to evaluate their success based on how the world defines success instead of how God defines it. In fact, the parent’s success is often evaluated by the worldly success of their children. Scripture has many comments about parenting and child training that are too numerous to mention here, but the Book of Proverbs is full of guidelines for parents.

Let us focus on one command that will be sufficient to prove this important point. It is found in the context of the “Greatest Commandment” and says,

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! ⁵ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; ⁷ and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:4-9)

The Hebrew word KAL, meaning “all,” actually occurs with each of the descriptions of our being (heart, soul, might) from where we are to “love God.” If there was ever a time in our life when we didn’t love Him with ALL our being, the law is violated. Please notice the next verses involve child training which is to be the first display of our love for God. With such high standards, it is easy to realize that every parent has failed to one degree or another.

There is also the issue of the actions of children. Only one perfect parent has ever existed, God Himself, who brought Adam and Eve into existence. He chose to give them the perfect ability to choose, and they chose to disobey Him. So even if there were perfect parents, their offspring are inclined to error, and in fact will fail in various ways as we all do (Rom 3:23).

Can a child be the source of deserved suffering on the parent? The answer to that is “yes,” if the parents did not teach their child how to live or set the example based on Biblical standards.

Can a child be the source of undeserved suffering on a parent? The answer to that is also “yes,” if the parents did seek to teach and lead them correctly and the child chose to go another way.

Can your life be a mixture of both deserved and undeserved suffering based on your parenting? That answer is also “yes.”

It seems that the evaluation of your parenting is best left to God, who knows all things. God has told us to learn the Truth and teach our children as well as possible (Eph 6:4).

11. Summary

God administers divine discipline seeking to wake up Believers who fall asleep spiritually (Eph 5:11-21). Believers can and do sin. Therefore, there are constant warnings to avoid sin and make adjustments when the sin is realized through the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). While living in sin eternal blessings will not be gained (Eph 5:3-10). Discipline can be mental or physical, but God’s desire for Believers is to stay close to Him through a full knowledge and application of His truth (1 Tim 2:3-4).

To answer our initial question in this chapter, “What standards did the Creator prescribe?” we must seek to know God’s Will through His Word and live it. This will involve the issue of winning battles against the power of sin and learning from the discipline that is administered.

In this chapter we have seen that God disciplines those He loves and that the Security of Salvation is not a license to sin, but a license to serve. For Believers who choose to serve God there are rewards that are over and above the blessings of heaven that are provided for all who are saved from the penalty for sin. Victory over the power of sin brings special blessings to individuals who overcome. The next chapter will describe those blessings.

For Personal Study:

- ✓ Discuss the agents that can administer Divine Discipline.
- ✓ Discuss the relationship between the Permissive Will of God and the administration of Divine Discipline.
- ✓ Discuss why Believers are disciplined.
- ✓ Can a Believer's salvation from the penalty for sin be lost?

Chapter 11

Service for Eternal Rewards - The Relationship Between Grace and Works

Service for Eternal Rewards – The Relationship Between Grace and Works

What Is the Difference Between Grace and Works?

A massive amount of Biblical evidence has been presented to show that anyone can accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and be saved forever from the PENALTY FOR SIN. The Creator is faithful to His Plan that is clearly revealed through His Word and is a consistent message throughout the Bible. We can know that we have eternal life, but what comes next? How should the Believer live? Once again, the Bible makes it clear that we are to live with eternity in mind (Col 3:1-4). This means that we do not need to earn, keep or prove our salvation but rather to thank God for His grace provision through good works in service to Him.

In the Plan of the Ages, God knew those who would chose for Him would face difficulties of all kinds, both from the world outside and the sin nature within. In wisdom and grace, the time of man on earth, described as a “vapor,” (Jas 4:14) would be rewarded eternally for loyalty to the truth. It is worth it all.

In previous chapters, it was Biblically proven beyond a reasonable doubt that salvation is **“by grace through faith and not of works.”** Clearly established throughout Scripture is the importance of works and a life of **Service** as shown on the **God vs Matter Chart**. It is therefore critically important for each individual to understand the Biblical relationship between grace and works. Since there is no confusion with God (1 Cor 14:33a), it is up to us to seek what He has revealed. Each passage of Scripture must be understood, not just within its own immediate context, but in the broader context of Scripture, thereby letting “Scripture interpret Scripture.”

What emerges in Scripture is a thoroughly beautiful plan that could have only been conceived by God Himself. It is complex in its scope, but simple in its structure (1 Cor 1:18-31). At the moment in time when an unbeliever puts their faith in Jesus as their Messiah, their PENALTY FOR SIN is forgiven and their eternal salvation guaranteed. We will call this, “Phase 1.” Those who believe are born again into a Christian life that must battle the POWER OF SIN that resides in the body of flesh (Gal 5:16). This we will call, “Phase 2.” With each battle victory is a “salvation” over the works of the flesh, the POWER OF SIN in life. The victory is accomplished for that moment in time (Gal 5:19-23). For example, a person addicted to alcohol might win many daily battles with the POWER OF SIN by not drinking, but one day begin to drink again. At that point they have “lost their salvation,” from the POWER OF SIN (Phase 2), but not from their salvation from the PENALTY FOR SIN (Phase 1). The PENALTY FOR SIN has been permanently removed. In passages that involve Christians doing a form of work, or sinning, Phase 2 is always the context, because “salvation is not of works.” Confusion exists in the understanding of God’s Word when Phase 1 and Phase 2 are not “rightly divided” so they can be understood correctly. Confusion occurs every time people try to merge the two phases and seek to make all the verses about works related to Phase 1. Being an “overcomer” by faith (1 John 5:4-5) begins when a person accepts Christ as their Savior and the PENALTY FOR SIN is removed. This guarantees eternity with God. Victories in Phase 2 over the POWER OF SIN are promised rewards of additional blessings over and above the common blessings of heaven, which is Phase 3, the final phase. This chapter will explore why these extra blessings are given.

There are several different positions held by Christians concerning the PENALTY FOR SIN and the POWER OF SIN, including:

- The first group of people believe they are SAVED BY WORKS, but any faith system that adds works to being saved from the PENALTY FOR SIN must be rejected, based on the clear statements of Scripture that have been frequently cited.
- The second group believes that an individual is saved from the PENALTY FOR SIN by grace, but that works must be produced to maintain their salvation. In reality, this position says that “grace plus works” saves the soul and adds works into the gospel, so this position must also be rejected because it does not meet the Scriptural standard.
- A third group believes that works prove our salvation, and those truly saved will produce good works. While good works are expected of Believers, this position also makes works a standard of salvation from the PENALTY FOR SIN, either in an individual’s own evaluation of self, or in the evaluation of others’ work, and thus is not scriptural.
- A fourth group believes that a person needs to work to receive grace, which denies the clear definition of grace. Grace is grace and works are works. According to Scripture, they are distinctly different.

- A fifth group believes that works will be rewarded for eternity. This is what is called inheritance. A complete explanation of the Bible's view of inheritance will follow throughout this chapter and further explain the difference between faith and works.

The chart below is an overview of the different Phases of the Christian Life:

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Salvation from the PENALTY FOR SIN	<u>The Christian's Life:</u> <u>Growing:</u> Salvation from the POWER OF SIN <u>Carnal:</u> Losing to the POWER OF SIN	<u>The Christian's Life in Eternity:</u> Presence of sin removed

A. Underlying Principles of Inheritance

1. Inheritance is Given to "The Heir"

The inheritance was given to "The Heir" for distribution (Heb 1:1-2), and there is no way to measure the wealth He received (Eph 3:8-10). He has chosen to share the wealth with those who respond to His invitation for relationship (Rev 22:12-14). Heirship and inheritance are described by the Greek noun KL8RONOMEROS and verb KL8RONOMERW. The "8" is representative of the Greek letter ETA and the "W" is the Greek letter Omega.

2. The Basis for Inheritance

Eternal inheritance is based on relationship plus obedience and not solely on genetics like some Jewish people believe. Ishmael was a genetic son of Abraham, but was not obedient concerning faith in the Lord and the subsequent expected works he should have produced (Gal 4:30). Salvation from the penalty for sin does not involve works (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7) but salvation from the power of sin does involve works, for which there are wages or rewards (Eph 2:10; Rom 4:4). Rewards are simply grace gifts extended into eternity (Eph 2:4-7).

3. Relationship to the Phases of Life

The works of those who are saved are called "wages" (Greek word MISTHOS) and the "wages" are based on production (Titus 3:14). Phase 1 obedience at the moment of faith in Jesus Christ guarantees your 'Presence' in eternity with God. Phase 2 obedience in time determines your 'Position' in eternity with God. Phase 3 will be the eternal 'Pleasure' of enjoying your relationship with Christ through the rewards.

4. Greater Blessings and Wasted Blessings

The Lord paid our personal debt for sin, and then in His grace provided an opportunity to have even greater blessings than eternal life (Heb 6:9). Any individual who wants to know the basis for eternal inheritance has asked a very important question (Luke 18:18; Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25-37) for which there are answers.

It is very important to note that Spiritual inheritance can be wasted by sin (Luke 15:11-32). Believers who live in sin, like the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:1-3), are carnal and are missing out on receiving eternal rewards.

B. Who Is the Source of the Rewards?

Jesus is "The Heir" so the inheritance is His to determine how to distribute (Heb 1:1-2). His human work earned His inheritance which involved His "Excellent Name" (Heb 1:3-4) referring to His virtuous reputation. His sacrifice secured the inheritance (Heb 9:13-15) as the Executor of the Plan established by the Father (John 5:36).

He is the ultimate source of divine works which are works encouraged by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus is "The Vine" (John 15:1-14), and the indwelling Holy Spirit encourages us to produce "fruit" (Gal 5:22-24).

C. What Are the Eternal Rewards?

The rewards include the common blessings of heaven that are given to all who believe in Jesus as the Messiah (Rev 21:1-6),⁶³ but there are rewards that are above and beyond the normal blessings of heaven that are given

⁶³ **Rev 21:1-6** And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. ² And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made

for personal spiritual production (Titus 3:7; Heb 6:1-12). All eternal rewards are imperishable, undefiled, and already reserved in heaven for Believers as an inheritance (1 Pet 1:3-5).

Eternal rewards above the common blessings of heaven may be considered as divine compensation for work done, and are called "wages" as evidenced by the clear usage of the Greek word MISTHOS. This word is translated both "wage" and "reward" in passages such as Matthew 20:8. Since God considers it a grievous sin to withhold wages that are due to workmen, it is obvious that He would not withhold a wage for something He offered in return for work done (Jas 5:4-6). The wages include Authority, Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones, and Crowns.

1. **Authority**

To receive the wage of Authority involves winning the internal war with the Sin Nature (Rom 6:12-14) and endurance in the Christian life (2 Tim 2:12). The authority has Millennial applications (Rev 5:9-10; 20:4) when The Church will rule with the Lord.

2. **Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones**

Receiving the "wages" of Gold, Silver and Precious Stones, as evidenced by the contrasts to wood, hay and stubble, involves individual works done in service to our Lord (1 Cor 3:10-15). In Scripture Gold is often a symbol of Deity, so the gold rewards imply works done from thanksgiving for God's divine nature. Silver is often a picture of Redemption, so the silver rewards imply they would be for works done out of thanksgiving for the Redeemer's work on the cross. Precious stones are often associated with the breastplate of the High Priest, so they imply rewards given for the correct function of the priesthood which includes praise, thanksgiving, doing good, and sharing, which are priestly sacrifices (Heb 13:15-16).

3. **Crowns**

Crowns are given based on the crown of thorns that Jesus wore, as part of the suffering of His sacrifice, therefore they involve the Believer's sacrifice for the Lord (Matt 27:29; Mark 15:7; John 19:2,5). The Lord Himself possesses the finest gold crown (Rev 14:14). Crowns given by the Lord are not perishable, like human crowns (1 Cor 9:25) and are directly related to the relationships that are built with others (Php 4:1). Part of the qualifications for a crown involves an unselfish attitude that wants to see other people succeed in the Christian life and helps them along the way (1 Thes 2:19). Crowns can be lost when a Believer turns from the Truth (Rev 3:11) and does not produce the work to receive this reward. Israel's special crown is the twelve tribes (Rev 12:1), who have survived history in spite of being the objects of attack throughout.

The Crowns Are:

- **The Crown of Righteousness** is given for fighting the good fight, keeping the faith, and living life in expectation of the Lord's return (2 Tim 4:8).
- **The Crown of Life** is given to those who persevere to the end in their love for the Lord (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10)
- **The Crown of Glory** is given to those who use their God-given authority in a sacrificial manner to serve others (1 Pet 5:4).

In summary, even crowns are the result of the grace of our Lord, because He was under no obligation to offer them (Rev 4:4,10).

4. **Counterfeits**

Where there is truth, Satan has a counterfeit. The antichrist receives a crown from man (Rev 6:2) and, demons wear crowns of fake gold (Rev 9:7).

ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men [presence of God], and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, ⁴ and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." ⁶ And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

The world offers its “wages” which are often counterfeits of the divine wage (Acts 1:18), and often sought as more valuable. The wages offered by the world play on the sins of greed and selfishness. Seeking worldly wages is not only costly to a Believer’s spiritual life but also dangerous to physical life (Jude 11).

Worldly wages may be the result of good things done for the wrong reasons (Matt 6:1), like giving (Matt 6:2-3), praying (Matt 6:5), or fasting (Matt 6:16). Worldly wages may come as a result of sinfulness and is due the wage of discipline, not eternal reward (2 Pet 2:12-15).

5. Some Works Worthy of Divine Wages

- A willing attitude of obedience to God (1 Cor 9:14-18)
- A Christian vocation (Luke 10:5-7; 1 Tim 5:18)
- Service to other Believers (Heb 6:9-12)
- Enduring insults and persecution for the cause of Christ (Matt 5:11-12; Luke 6:22-23)
- Loving your enemies (Matt 5:43-48; Luke 6:35)
- Authentic hospitality (Matt 10:40-42)
- Serving with others on the same mission (John 4:36-38; 1 Cor 3:6-9)
- Building upon the Foundation of Jesus the Messiah (1 Cor 3:10-15)

Believers should diligently seek to receive a full wage from the Lord (2 John 8), not missing any opportunity. Works done with the wrong motives, like for self-promotion, will merely be worldly wages and not eternally rewarded.

6. The Wages Become Treasures Because of Their Inherent Value

All the real treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ (Col 2:1-3). What you view as valuable guides your heart (Matt 6:19-21), and what is treasured in your heart is often displayed in your speech (Matt 12:35-37).

Heavenly treasure is more valuable than any earthly treasure (Matt 13:44; 19:20-22) no matter the magnitude of the earthly treasure (Heb 11:24-26).

Our past experiences, even those times spent in sin, can be valuable if we have learned from them an important lesson in life such as the importance of honor. Spiritual leaders are not perfect people, but they should be mature in their thinking because of changes in the way they think through learning and living God’s Word (Matt 13:47-52). Treasures have more value when they are shared (Matt 2:11-12).

7. The Inheritance Includes

- **Fame** – we are in the Royal Family of God (1 Pet 2:9-10).
- **Fortune** – eternal blessings of all kinds (Matt 6:19-21; Eph 1:3).
- **Power** – in time and eternity through the residing Holy Spirit (Acts 1:7-8).
- **Pleasure** – exceeding joy for eternity (Jude 24-25).

D. Who Receives the Rewards?

The reward for the common blessings of heaven begins with faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 4:13-15; Heb 11:9-10), which trusts in His work to provide eternal life, therefore becoming a fellow-heir (Titus 3:7). This standard preceded Abraham and is seen by example in Noah (Heb 11:7).

Saving faith brings the Holy Spirit into our lives as a testimony that we are children of God and thus fellow-heirs with His Son (Rom 8:16-17; Gal 4:7; Eph 3:5-6). The Indwelling Holy Spirit is the “pledge” on our full inheritance (Eph 1:13-14) and extends to non-Jews (Gal 3:28-29).

1. The Overcomers

“The Heir,” Jesus Christ, has been the primary object of attacks from evil (Matt 21:37-39; Mark 12:7 & Luke 20:14) and rewards will go to those who follow His example and “Overcome.”

Overcoming is a function of faith that begins with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so every Believer will get some eternal rewards (1 John 5:4-5).

The primary reason for the title “Overcomer” is to recognize Believers who win battles with the power of sin in their life. The word is used for being overcome, like the overwhelming feeling of needing sleep after a long period without. So it involves a submission to a greater power, that being God (Luke 9:32; Acts 20:9). For that reason, being an overcomer denotes a person who in a sense becomes powerless by dying to personal desires and choosing what is pleasing to God. An “overcomer” is a person who is “overcome” by “The Overcomer,” The Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 5:4-5; John 16:33).

The title “Overcomer” clearly involves the personal battle with Satan and his forces (1 John 2:13-14). At times evil will appear to win, like when the beast kills the two witnesses in the Tribulation (Rev 11:7). Some physical battles are won by Satan’s forces (Rev 13:7), but the Lamb will ultimately win (Rev 17:12-14).

We face an internal battle with the Sin Nature so its power also needs to be overcome (2 Pet 2:18-22). The internal battle involves decisions on whether or not to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit or follow the lusts of the flesh (1 John 4:2-4). This battle is won with divine good, namely works that are pleasing to God (Rom 12:21). The Lord promises an abundant inheritance to Believers who win the spiritual battles with the flesh and the world in time (Rev 21:7-8).

2. The Overcomers of the Seven Churches of Revelation (Please look up Rev 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21)

a. Summary of each church:

- **Ephesus** – A doctrinally sound church that forgot the importance of relationships
- **Smyrna** – A courageous church facing potential fear
- **Pergamum** – A faithful church but infiltrated by evil teachers
- **Thyatira** – A church infiltrated by evil
- **Sardis** – A church with a good reputation before men, but incomplete before God
- **Philadelphia** – A church in harmony with God
- **Laodicea** – A wealthy, lukewarm church

b. Good qualities of Overcomers according to the letters to the churches:

Labor under adversity	Works
Faith	Patience
Doctrinally sound	Service
Endurance under pressure	Love
Good reputation	Growth
Use their power	Did not deny Christ
Loved by Christ	Appreciate the cross
Not tired of doing good	Hate dishonest gain
Rich relationship with God	Hold Christ's reputation
Trust Him during pressure	

c. Hindrances to being an Overcomer according to the letters to the churches:

Leave love of the brethren	Immoral
Reject valid authority	Elitists
Infiltrate by greed	Fear
Tolerate Jezebel	Join with Jezebel
Anti-Semitic	Lukewarmness
Compromise with the world	Dead works

d. Solutions to the hindrances according to the letters to the churches:

Remember past good	Revive
Seek spiritual wealth	Repent (used four times = 4x) ⁶⁴
Put spiritual clothes on	Restart good works
Return to faith and hope	Faith
Be uncompromising disciple	

⁶⁴ Notice that “repent” is mentioned four times here, because it is commanded to four different churches. This shows the importance of a change of mind and actions when confronted with mistakes.

e. Potential discipline for failure according to the letters to the churches:

Lose position of light	Miss a crown
At war with the Lord	Spit out
Not ready for the Lord	Rebuke
Loss of children	Mixed discipline
Reap what is sown	Slow death
More pressure	

f. Specific rewards for Overcoming according to the letters to the churches:

Eat from the Tree of Life	White garments
Crown of Life	Permanent honor
Hidden manna	Divine announcement
Divine approval	Crown of righteousness
Divine nickname	Divine "tattoo"
Morning Star	Private dinner party
Special relationship	Sit on the throne with Christ

E. Why Will the Rewards Be Given?

1. The Importance of Obedience

Rewards begin with acts of obedience through faith in the "Giver" of the rewards (Heb 12:17). Believers need enlightenment to embrace the concept of eternal inheritance (Eph 1:18-19). Angels work to help us in ways often unnoticed (Heb 1:14).

Inheritance is a reward for perseverance in the faith (Heb 6:11-12), through consistent obedience to specific directives, like:

- Following the model of Abraham (Heb 11:8).
- Living out Christian directives by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 3:8-9).
- Love toward God (Jas 2:5).
- Honorable relationships (1 Pet 3:7).
- Lack of greed (Luke 12:13-21).
- Gentleness (Matt 5:5).
- Being spiritually alert to the word of His grace (Acts 20:31-32).
- Making Jesus your top priority (Matt 19:29-30).

2. Inheritance Is Acquired Through Good Works

Believers are a new creation made for good works (Eph 2:10). God began the good work in you, at the moment of salvation, from which other good works are produced. He will bring it to complete maturity (Php 1:6) when Believers receive their resurrection bodies. The application to life is that we are called to let our works be seen in such a way that the Father will be glorified (Matt 5:16).

The Father and Son specifically grant rewards in time for good works (2 Thes 2:16-17) and use your loving good work for a greater good that will touch more people (Rom 8:28). For example, He can take your offering for missions and multiply that offering to bring the Gospel to more people than you can imagine.

3. Examples of Some Good Works that are Worthy of Reward

- Generosity (1 Tim 6:17-19)
- Becoming an honorable vessel (2 Tim 2:21)
- Honoring God's inspired Word as the guide (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord (Col 1:9-12)
- Acting in a godly way (1 Tim 2:9-10)
- Setting a good example for the next generation (1 Tim 5:9-10)

4. The “Good Works” Produce “Fruit” (Col 1:9-10)

Jesus Himself is the “fruit” of the Plan of God (Luke 1:39-42), so the imputed righteousness at the moment of salvation is itself fruit produced by the Lord Jesus Christ (Php 1:9-11). The original fruit of faith in Jesus Christ is salvation from the penalty for sin (Rom 6:20-23).

5. The Impact of Personal Sins in the Life of the Believer

Sins lower the potential for special eternal blessings (Eph 5:5-6; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21) so it is possible for a Believer to stand in shame before the Lord for not believing His promise of Eternal Life, therefore rejecting the assurance of salvation that He has promised (1 John 2:25-28). The power of sin needs to be fought with all our strength (Heb 12:4-6).

6. There Is Both a Heavenly and Worldly Fruit Production

That which is heavenly will be designated “Spiritual Fruit,” and that which is worldly will be designated as “counterfeit” (Matt 7:15-23). Each individual is responsible for the type of fruit that is produced (Matt 12:32-33).

Spiritual Fruit and counterfeit (worldly) fruit will exist alongside each other until the final harvest. (Matt 13:24-30). This is because Believers and unbelievers are living together in the same world. When worldly fruit is produced at the expense of Spiritual Fruit, the results can be spiritual disaster (Luke 12:16-21). Failure to produce the right fruit leads to discipline (Matt 3:10) and some fruit trees need to be destroyed for lack of production (Matt 21:18-22).

Those in positions of authority need to serve others. An example is verifying they have kept their word (Rom 15:27-29).

Spiritual Fruit is an outgrowth of a person’s change of mind (Matt 3:8), so Spiritual Fruit begins with a “death,” meaning a separation from worldly attitudes (John 12:20-26). It continues with a personal desire to produce good fruit (Luke 6:39-45). This fruit can be produced only by receiving nourishment through The Vine (John 15:1-17), and acquiring and using heavenly wisdom (Jas 3:17-18).

Spiritual Fruit is wrapped in goodness, righteousness, and truth, doing what is pleasing to the Lord (Eph 5:7-10). Spiritual Fruit is revealed through:

- Mission work (John 4:34-38).
- Production at the right time (Matt 21:33-44).
- Seeking to produce fruit in others (Rom 1:13).
- Living for Christ (Php 1:21-22).
- Leading others to produce fruit so their divine account may increase (Php 4:15-17).
- Praising God (Heb 13:15-17).

There can indeed be some physical blessings in time for a job well done (1 Cor 9:3-9; 2 Tim 2:5-6), which clearly involves peace in the midst of turmoil (Heb 12:9-13) and watching the Lord multiply your Spiritual Fruit (Matt 13:8-9).

Some fruit of the Plan of God will only be seen at the proper time (Jas 5:7). The seeds will be planted but nothing grows until it is time for fruit. For example, fulfillment of prophetic events often begins centuries before they come to fruition. Eternity will possess a constant reminder of the blessings associated with fruit production in time (Rev 22:1-5).

F. Can the Rewards Be Lost?

Believers must be careful to not “lose” a crown (1 Cor 9:24-27). A Believer can only “lose” rewards by not making the effort to gain them in the first place. The potential gain was lost, but if the reward was already gained it cannot be lost. For example, an individual might have an inheritance from a relative that they must go pick up. If they never go pick the item up it is “lost.”

Our inheritance is backed by the promise of God so once gained it cannot be lost (Heb 6:17-20; Gal 3:18). Remember that some rewards (like crowns) are given for perseverance (consistent application of God’s Word) to the end of physical life (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10).

Unfruitfulness (Greek word AKARPOS) will keep a Believer from receiving a reward but will not remove those rewards already guaranteed (2 Tim 2:12-13).

Some specific unfruitful actions:

- Pursuing earthly wealth at the expense of spiritual things (Matt 13:22 & Mark 4:19)
- Speaking words without understanding (1 Cor 14:14)
- Falling prey to Satan's charms (Eph 5:11)
- Failure to identify the real priorities of life (2 Pet 1:5-8)
- Failure to see the importance of good deeds in the Christian life (Titus 3:14)

The production of worldly fruit is the message of the false teachers of the last days (Jude 11-13), so beware and don't fall prey to it.

G. When Will the Rewards Be Given?

The "payment" for doing our job in time "as unto the Lord" is guaranteed (Col 3:23-25).

Believers will be part of what is called the First Resurrection (Rev 20:4-6). This will occur in four stages and all four stages will be prior to the Great White Throne Judgment, which is for unbelievers only (Rev 20:11-14). The four stages are described in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 which says,

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.²¹ For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits [Stage 1], after that those who are Christ's at His coming [Stage 2 = His Bride, which is The Church at the Rapture],²⁴ then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet [Stage 3 = When all Believers prior to The Church will be resurrected to participate in the Millennial Kingdom. This will happen at the Second Advent].²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death [Stage 4 = This will be after the Millennium when the Millennial saints who have died will be resurrected].²⁷ For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.²⁸ And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.

The Rapture of The Church, prior to the Tribulation, will begin the distribution of eternal rewards to all Church Age Believers (John 14:1-3; 2 Cor 5:6-10; 1 Cor 15:50-58).

The Second Advent will reward all the saints of previous dispensations (Matt 25:34; Dan 12:1-4; Rev 11:17-18).

The Lord will bring His reward without any unnecessary delay (Rev 22:12-13), meaning in accordance with prophecies that must be fulfilled.⁶⁵

Stage	First Resurrection	Second Resurrection	When	Destination
Stage 1	Jesus Christ		After the Cross	Heaven
Stage 2	Church		Rapture	Heaven
Stage 3	Pre-Church Saints		Second Advent	Earth-Heaven
Stage 4	Millennial Saints		End of Millennium	Heaven
		Unbelievers	Great White Throne	Lake of Fire

⁶⁵ The Greek word TACHU and its related words is usually translated "quickly." When one studies the usages in passages in which it is found it becomes clear that there are events that must occur before His return. There are "necessary" delays. So when the Lord uses the term "quickly" He is saying "without unnecessary delay."

H. What About Blessings in Time?

In today's world, success is often evaluated by the fame, fortune, power, and pleasure the world promotes and individuals gladly receive. The Scripture often warns us to beware of developing a love for money or the things of the world (1 Tim 6:10; 1 John 2:15-17). In context, the passage cited in 1 Timothy includes pastors and those in spiritual leadership.

Sadly, many people today take Scripture verses out of context and try to turn them into promises of physical blessing in time, claiming that God will make you healthy, wealthy, and wise in a worldly sense. This is promoted by claiming that if a person will just have enough faith, or do certain things (often give to their ministry), that God has promised wealth to all who will perform.

1. True Spiritual Faith

Let us first Biblically consider the meaning of true Spiritual Faith. Spiritual Faith is about the object of the faith. There is one God and neither you, nor I, are Him, nor can we ever be Him. We are not beings who can "create out of nothing" the heavens and earth. Some may reach such a stage of delusion that they might actually believe they can, but the problem is in the object of the faith, not the strength of belief. Biblical faith is about God's person and plan and how He has revealed Himself. Spiritual faith trusts His clearly stated directive will. Spiritual Faith relies on the Holy Spirit for guidance in the areas of life that are not specifically addressed in the Word. Spiritual Faith believes that God can answer any prayer, but as the Sovereign King, He may not. It is a faith that says, "*not my will, but Your will be done*" (Luke 22:41-42). It is faith that if His answer to your request is "no" or "not yet," that you will be content with that answer, living in His grace (2 Cor 12:8-9) and not wrongly judging yourself for a "lack" of faith. The true Christian attitude of faith while giving of yourself or your resources should be one of thanksgiving for God's grace, expecting nothing in return (Luke 6:34-35), and joy, because it is pleasing to God (2 Cor 9:7).

Giving to God in order to get back from Him greater blessings is an attempt to manipulate the Almighty, and is sin. It is a modern form of mocking God, which will not result in true success in life (Gal 6:7).

2. Has God Promised Physical Wealth to All?

It is true that God did bless some people of the Bible with vast wealth, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, and Solomon. It is equally true that the Son of Man did not have "*a place to lay His head*" (Matt 8:20). Very few Church Age Christians have had great wealth. It is absolutely not true that God has promised Christians great physical wealth while we are living in this body on earth. This false teaching, often called "Prosperity Theology," has misled and damaged many Christians, especially beginning in the latter part of the 20th Century with the electronic age and television. Many good Believers discovered they had been deceived and left the faith while many others just thought that they would never have enough faith to get God to carry out their personal will, so they just gave up. This deceptive practice went on even in the early church (1 Tim 6:5-10), but a great expansion of the deception was foretold for the last days of The Church, and is being accomplished now (2 Tim 3:5-7). What God has promised in this world is trials and suffering, not earthly prosperity, which are designed for our spiritual growth (John 16:33; Rom 5:3-5).

3. Biblical Vocabulary

The vocabulary associated with blessings include the Hebrew verb BARAK (used 330 times = 330x) and the Hebrew noun BERACHAH (69x); the Greek verb EULOGEO (41x, meaning to "speak well of"); the Greek adjective EULOGETOS (8x, meaning "blessed," or "spoken well of" and is applied only to God); the Greek noun EULOGIA (16x, meaning "blessing," or the result of what is "spoken well of"); There is also the Greek verb MAKARIDZO (2x with the basic meaning of the blessing of happiness); its adjective form MAKARIOS (50x and the key word Matthew 5); and the noun form MAKARISMOS (3x). It is easy to see that the Bible has a lot to say about blessings.⁶⁶

4. Jesus' Teachings about Physical Wealth

Sound doctrine is built upon the words of Jesus Christ (1 Tim 6:3-4). This means that He sets the standard for what is correct and what is not. In Matthew 5, Jesus said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁶⁶ Taken from W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985; and George V. Wigram, *The Englishman's Greek Concordance*, 1996

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. ¹² Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt 5:3-12)

The Greek word used in that passage for blessed (MAKARIOS) denotes happiness that comes from blessing. Notice how many times in this passage alone that Jesus speaks of blessing that has nothing to do with worldly fame, fortune, power or pleasure.

5. What About the Teaching of 2 Corinthians 9:5-15?

Many have misunderstood or intentionally misinterpreted and misapplied 2 Corinthians 9:5-15.

So I [Paul] thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness **[this refers to greed; notice that even though Paul benefits from gifts like this, the context is for an offering to be taken for the Jerusalem saints who are facing famine. This is an important offering, but even for this purpose he wants them to give for the right reasons and not to increase his wealth]**. ⁶ Now this I [Paul] say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully **[this is the principle of sowing and reaping which is universally true]**. ⁷ Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart **[act upon your faith]**; not grudgingly or under compulsion **[a free will offering that is not forced in any way; this is not out of law or duty, but love]**; for **[Paul explains why]** God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able **[has the power]** to make all grace **[notice that it does not say financial wealth]** abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything **[things both physical and spiritual]**, you may have an abundance for every good deed **[there is not an abundance for every good thing that your heart may desire, but for every good work you would like to do for Him in accordance with His will; He will provide enough for you to keep giving it away]**; ⁹ as it is written, "He **[Messiah]** scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever." ¹⁰ Now He **[God]** who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness **[this is clearly a spiritual matter]**; ¹¹ you will be enriched in everything for all liberality **[enriched in spiritual things for generosity]**, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God **[they are the recipients]**. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, ¹⁴ while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

6. The "Parable of the Shrewd Steward"

Sometimes false teachers try to justify the use of manipulative methods seeking to extract funds or use the master's funds wrongfully for their own selfish ends. The incorrect interpretation of Luke 16:1-13, the "Parable of the Unrighteous Steward," seems to give some false teachers permission to act in a sinful manner. It comes from an incorrect identification of "the master" in this Parable. The master in this Parable is not the Lord because this master rejoices over the dishonesty of his steward and is himself "serving mammon" (Luke 16:1-13), and unrighteous activity.

7. Some Real Scriptural Blessings

Many things are referred to as blessings in the Scriptures. Following are just a few of them:

- Blessing is being more interested in God's standards than man's praise (Psa 1:1-2).
- Blessing is taking refuge in the Son and not subject to His discipline (Psa 2:12).
- Blessing is found in forgiveness of sins and lack of deceit (Psa 32:1-2; Rom 4:6-8).
- Blessing is when one qualifies to receive a promise of God (Jas 1:12).

- Blessing is to believe the prophecy of the Book of Revelation (Rev 1:3).
- Blessing is never being subject to hell (Rev 20:6).
- Blessing is to believe that the Lord is going to return for you (Rev 22:7).
- Blessing is to know where you will spend eternity (Rev 22:14).
- Blessing is having a lot of children (Psa 127:3-5).

8. **Spiritual Leaders and Money**

One of the most important qualifications of being a spiritual leader involves being “above reproach” which speaks of spiritual integrity, and specifically in the area of money (1 Tim 3:2-3; 6:8-10; Titus 1:5-9; Heb 13:5).

Some very simple applications to this principle are easily overlooked when leaders face difficult circumstances of life, or are led by greed. Sometimes circumstances are exaggerated to make things appear to be more critical than they truly are. Exaggeration for personal benefit or ministry is still a lie, so it is not to be used by spiritual leaders to raise funds no matter how worthy a project or how desperate a situation may be.

One important test, that sadly too many pastors have failed, is to present an opportunity to multiple people seeking assistance to meet a pressing need or opportunity. The test is when different people step forward to meet the need and the gifts exceed that which was requested. The test becomes more difficult if the givers do not know each other, and the leader is aware of that fact. The honorable thing to do, that which is “above reproach,” is to tell the other donor(s) that their funds are no longer needed for that purpose. It is legitimate to offer another need or project that might also be helped by the funds, but it is not honorable to fail to disclose to the givers what has happened.

Spiritual leaders should function, especially in financial matters, to be accountable to others (including the spiritual leaders and their individual congregations) with the receipt and handling of funds. Our objective is to do nothing that would discredit the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 8:18-21).

9. **Summary**

Godliness, or living a life of reverence toward God, does not guarantee physical blessings but is a step toward enjoying the spiritual blessings of truth and contentment in greater abundance (1 Tim 6:3-10). Life is more than food and physical prosperity (Luke 12:22-23).

Our intentions should be to obey the Lord because it is the correct response to His love for us, not because we are hoping to get something else. He has already given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:2-3). Our attitude of service toward our Lord should be that we do not need anything else, but are simply His bondservants (a person who has chosen to serve the Master) doing what we should for what He has already done (Luke 17:7-10).

There are many, many blessings for the Believer during his time in this body on earth. Some may be made wealthy, but not all, because some are called to suffer poverty for the cause of Christ and keep their faith focused on Him. Most Believers are simply called to having “enough,” so the important thing is to learn contentment in any and every physical circumstance by relying on Christ (Php 4:12-13).

Our initial question, “What is the difference between grace and works,” has been Biblically answered. Grace is the unmerited favor of God while works are actions the Believer should perform out of thanksgiving for our great salvation. Works done in service to God will be rewarded for eternity.

The simple application of these principles is to live our life in such a way that we will store up treasures in heaven (Matt 6:19-21).

This chapter has laid out the evidence that a Believer’s life should not be a life of self-serving activities but rather a life of service to God by serving others. It is a clear application of following the model set by the Lord Himself who was truly humble and displayed it by serving others (Php 2:3-5). When our lives begin to look more like His in our thoughts, speech and actions we are being transformed into the people that God desires us to be. The next chapter will present the description of a “Transformed Life.”

For Personal Study:

- ✓ **Who provides the rewards?**
- ✓ **What are the rewards?**
- ✓ **Why will they be given?**
- ✓ **When will they be given?**

Chapter 12

Transformation: Personal Practical Applications

Transformation: Personal Practical Applications

How Does the Bible Describe a “Transformed Life?”

(See Chart)

The initial question in this study asked how all things began. Was it **God or Matter** that was the ultimate cause of all things? Once the evidence was explored, it was reasonable to take the step of faith that God was the ultimate cause and that evolution lacked enough good evidence to accept as true.

Next, we asked if the Creator would reveal Himself and found that He did. We asked if His **Revelation** would be perfect or not and concluded that the evidence showed it would be accurate because of **Inspiration** and that it had been transmitted through the centuries with a high degree of accuracy. Having established that it was accurate it was determined that we should therefore seek the **Author’s Will** of Scripture rather than trying to read our own will into it. It was established that **Truth** existed, and we could have **Assurance** of where we would spend eternity.

With these reasonable steps of faith it was easy to see that the Word of God would give us a **Changed Life** if we followed its directions so that we would serve the Creator rather than ourselves. Over the course of time this change will result in a transformation (**Transformed**) that is clearly what God desires for each of us (Rom 12:1-2). The Transformation will be based on the degree to which we submit to Him as priests for change (Rom 12:1-2). Are we giving Him all of our lives or only certain parts for Transformation? The way to recognize this change is when we **Love God and Others** and it begins to align with His, even loving our enemies as He does (Luke 6:35-37).

As we follow the Lord’s prescribed principles a transformation will occur in our lives. It will be in varying degrees in different Believers, and is not always observable by man for **“man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart”** (1 Sam 16:7). Since entry into the righteous side of God’s plan is by grace, we are to continue in grace (Col 2:6-7). This leads us to seek standards by which we may examine our spiritual growth, (2 Cor 13:5) like Faith, Hope, and Love. God’s Grace is the foundation of a Believer’s life and therefore Believers are commanded to live in it.

This chapter will explore God’s description of a **Transformed** life. It will establish a Biblical standard to evaluate ourselves as we live day-to-day in Satan’s world and seek to reasonably explain some issues that have led to confusion in the lives of many Christians.

A. Some Commands for the Christian Walk

- **Grow in Grace**, which means that we learn to appreciate His grace more every day of our life through the study of the Scripture and application to life (2 Pet 3:17-18).
- **Come with Confidence to the Throne of Grace**, which means that we come by means of prayer into the presence of the One who holds the power of grace (Heb 4:16).
- **Recognize His Grace in Our Sufferings**, which means that we trust Him to sustain us through the difficulties of life (2 Cor 12:9-10).
- **Stabilize Our Lives Through Growth in His Grace**, which comes through a constant appreciation of having been given the undeserved favor of God, resulting in emotional steadiness (1 Pet 5:12).
- **Live a Holy Life by Means of Grace**, which is thanksgiving to God for His forgiveness of the errors we make in our spiritual advance (2 Cor 1:12).
- **Use God’s Grace to Labor for Others as a Faithful Witness of Christ** (1 Cor 15:10).
- **Encourage Others to rely on His Grace**, especially in times of failure (Heb 12:15).

B. Fellowship and Intimacy

Fellowship by definition is companionship with people, whether through a community of interests, activities, feelings, or experiences. It also refers to a group of friends and involves association with One Another, and at times, membership within a group.

Many times, fellowship is evaluated based on emotional feelings. God gave and designed emotions to respond to circumstances or events, but responses should first be considered based on the standards of the Word of God to determine their validity. For example, sex outside of marriage between a man and woman, which is an

intimate fellowship, often has a pleasing emotional response, but is a sinful fellowship, so emotions cannot be the sole standard of evaluation of godly fellowship and intimacy.

1. Vocabulary

The Greek words for fellowship are the verb, KOINONEO, meaning to share with others; the feminine noun, KOINONIA, referring to the interaction between people itself; and the masculine noun, KOINONOS, meaning a partner, associate, or companion. Fellowship is an association with others that possesses the potential for various degrees of intimacy.

2. Theological Distinctions

Distinction must be made between Sanctification, Spirituality, and Fellowship with God. The terms are interrelated to each other but are not equal. Spirituality refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit in us and is absolute. Sanctification refers to transformation by the Holy Spirit at salvation into a New Creation, which is also absolute but continues to a transformation into the Image of Christ which is based on a Believer's obedience (2 Cor 3:17-18). It is like selecting a piece of clay before the sculpturing process begins, or a piece of wood before an item is carved. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us in part for fellowship (2 Cor 13:14).

At the moment of faith in Christ (Phase 1), Sanctification refers to being given the Holiness of God (called "Justification by faith") for the purpose of fellowship. Sanctification at initial salvation sets a person apart for the purpose of growth in holiness (1 Pet 1:13-16). It is absolute and not a matter of degree (1 Cor 1:2; 6:9-11). Phase 1 Spirituality is also absolute due to the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), and Phase 1 Fellowship is also absolute due to fellowship with the Spirit through our position "in Christ" (Php 2:1).

During the practice of living by faith in Christ (Phase 2), Sanctification involves the process of becoming holy in order to enjoy fellowship. This Sanctification is relative to the degree of holiness a Believer is living and is connected to personal potential for intimacy (Rom 6:19-23; 1 Thes 4:3-8). This Sanctification requires the individual desire to be set apart and holy decisions that make one useful to the Master (2 Tim 2:21-26). Phase 2 Spirituality is the process of embracing, through faith, the holy transformation that God desires in us (Rom 1:16-17; Col 2:6-7). The degree of transformation is related to one's level of maturity. Phase 2 Fellowship is the process of loving the Lord to a greater degree through knowledge of His Word and obedience to it (1 John 1:1-3).

Phase 3 Sanctification is the ultimate "set apart" because the Believer is in heaven and perfect forever. Phase 3 Spirituality and Fellowship are also the ultimate because we have been "made perfect forever" (Heb 12:22-23).

The following chart will help explain the differences between Sanctification, Spirituality and, Fellowship.

Comparison of Sanctification, Spirituality, and Fellowship

Term	Phase 1 Salvation: From the PENALTY FOR SIN	Phase 2 The Growing Christian's Life: Salvation from the POWER OF SIN	Phase 2 The Carnal Christian's Life: Losing the Battle to the POWER OF SIN	Phase 3 The Christian's Life in Eternity: Presence of Sin Removed
Sanctification (to make holy by means of cleansing)	Permanent based on receipt of the Holiness of God (1 Cor 6:11)	Increasing holiness dependent on consistent decisions to live according to the Word of God and cleanse oneself from sin (2 Tim 2:21, Rom 6:19, 1 Thes 4:3; 1 John 2:1; 3:3-4)	Lack of growth in holiness as the Believer rejects the Word of God and becomes dominated by the power of sin (Eph 4:30-31; 1 Thes 5:19; 1 Cor 1:2; 3:1)	Holiness perfected with no more sin forever (Eph 5:26-27)
Spirituality (presence and influence of the Holy Spirit)	Permanent presence based on the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit who never departs (Rom 8:11, 1 Cor 6:19)	Increasing influence of the Holy Spirit through study of His Word and compliance as He fills with the "fullness of God" producing fruit (Eph 3:14-19; Gal 5:22).	Lack of reliance on the Holy Spirit by permitting Him less influence (Gal 5:18-26)	Completed spiritual liberty (2 Cor 3:17)
Fellowship (increasing intimacy with God)	Permanent based on love relationship with our Savior (1 Cor 1:9)	Increasing relationship as His Word is studied and decisions are made compatible with walking in the light and confessing sins (1 John 1:6-10, Col 2:6-7)	Lack of intimacy based on "walking in the darkness" or not dealing with the issue of sin in a Believer's life (1 John 1:3-10)	Intimacy fully realized (Eph 5:23)

3. The Presence and Influence of the Holy Spirit

It is easy to confuse the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives with His influence over our lives (Gal 6:1-2). His presence requires the decision to accept Jesus as the Savior, but His influence requires our acceptance and compliance with His leading. At salvation, the Holy Spirit moves into the Believer, to establish an absolute and permanent spirituality, which is known as His "indwelling" (John 14:16-17; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19).

Once inside, His desire is to replace wickedness with good (Rom 8:9-11). This is a process of "filling with all the fullness of God" which produces the fruit of the Spirit (Eph 3:14-19), and is accomplished by the "renewing of our minds" (Rom 12:2). We are commanded to cooperate by avoiding sin while the Holy Spirit does this filling (Eph 5:15-18).

Unbelieving mankind is filled with sin and evil, so those thoughts and actions must be replaced (Rom 1:28-32). Believers still possess sin natures and can act like unbelievers. The fewer sins a Believer commits, the greater the potential for fruit which serves as evidence of growth and Phase 2 deliverance from the power of sin.

The Holy Spirit brings the Love of God into the Believer with His own Presence, to spread this love to others (1 John 4:7-11; Gal 5:22). In addition to love, the Holy Spirit fills the Believer with righteous knowledge so the Believer will be equipped:

- to admonish others (Rom 15:13-14).
- to produce the fruit of righteousness.
- for the purpose of discernment (Php 1:9-11).
- to receive the knowledge of God's will, in order to please Him in everything (Col 1:9-12; 4:12).

Although the Holy Spirit has brought these qualities into the Believer, the Believer still needs to study the Word to find out what the qualities are and then be conformed to them (2 Cor 3:18).

There are characteristics of the “filling” of the Holy Spirit that are most noted by the willing spiritual transformation that includes submission to the Father’s Sovereignty and Plan, humble reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:1-3), with Christ dwelling in the heart through faith (Col 1:27).

Spirituality is therefore absolute concerning the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, but relative concerning His influence in the Believer’s life and the degree of personal Sanctification (Gal 4:19).

Spiritual Fellowship is a Love Relationship. Therefore, it is absolute in its potential because the Holy Spirit is present in us, but relative in its experience, due to sins like arrogance and self-will that keep the Believer from experiencing intimacy with God.

4. Degrees of Sanctification and Fellowship

There are degrees of Sanctification and Fellowship in Phase 2, just as there are degrees of reliance on the Holy Spirit. For example, when a man and woman are married their union is “sanctified” (meaning “set apart”). It becomes more “sanctified” as they conform to the Biblical standards for marriage and maintain them through their lives. This initial sanctified fellowship is special, but the intimate fellowship has just begun and over time they should grow closer to each other as they learn about each other not just physically but experientially through sharing themselves. New Believers in marriage (as well as any Believer) may only rely on the Holy Spirit when they have exhausted their human options, but not rely on Him as long as they think they can handle their problems alone. Both faith in God’s Word concerning the principles of marriage and avoidance of sin play a major part in Sanctification and Fellowship.

5. The Questions of Fellowship

There are some obvious questions that should be asked when fellowship is considered and sought by Believers. Below are basic questions we ask when we are studying Scripture and therefore are reasonable to ask as we seek to study a particular principle.

- Who do we fellowship with?
- What is fellowship?
- When is fellowship to occur?
- How do we fellowship with One Another?
- Where are good places to fellowship?
- Why is it important?
- How does fellowship grow and become more fruitful?

6. The Method, Motive and Mission of Fellowship

The method is to proceed by Faith as we learn to trust our Lord more and more. The motive is love which is a step of faith to give from a Believer’s innermost being and not to just seek to receive the love from others. The mission is grounded in hope for an intimacy of relationship with the Living God.

Fellowship may exist in thought, speech and actions. The “One Another” principles discussed later in this chapter seek to teach us how to agree with God on what He has revealed, speak in such a way as to build up, encourage and comfort others, and act so as to serve others in tangible ways.

The principles of fellowship with God and One Another are similar.

7. Where Can Fellowship Exist?

It can exist in the presence of others who assemble together, like in church gatherings, or communication with electronic means, or while serving together doing the same things. Some of the greatest fellowship is discussing the greatness of God in one accord (Rom 15:5-6).

8. Types of Fellowship

There are five categories of spiritual fellowship with God that lead to intimacy with Him. They are contact, confession of sins, communication, connection, and completion.

a. Contact – occurs at Phase 1:

Contact with God through faith in His Son brings salvation which is an “absolute fellowship” with Him (John 3:36). The Holy Spirit at the point of faith indwells the person who believes in Christ. The indwelling is not lost by sin as evidenced by the carnal Corinthians who were still indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16). Jesus Messiah took on flesh and blood to fellowship with humanity so that those under the power of the devil may be set free (Heb 2:14-15). Contact occurs when we choose to share in Christ’s person and work (1 Cor 1:9). This contact establishes the potential to fully partake of God’s Divine Nature (2 Pet 1:4).

b. Confession of sins – occurs during Phase 2:

Confession of sins brings forgiveness, which reconnects us to the absolute Spiritual Fellowship with the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 John 1:6-10). Sin stands in the way of mature fellowship with the Divine Nature, so when sin is recognized it is to be confessed to God. Lawlessness and spiritual darkness are not part of spiritual fellowship (2 Cor 6:14), so a Believer who has unconfessed or ongoing sin in his life is considered “carnal” and cannot understand the things of God (1 Cor 2:10-16). If one claims fellowship with God but walks in the darkness that person is said to be a liar (1 John 1:6).

Spiritual Fellowship is marked by reliance on the Holy Spirit, which is knowledge plus faith in God’s revealed Word (2 Cor 13:14). His Word sets the standards for sin and determines whether or not confession is needed.

Please note four important points about forgiveness and confession:

- 1) Forgiveness does not necessarily eliminate the consequences of the sin in time.
- 2) Forgiveness means there is no eternal discipline, but sin can carry eternal loss. Divine Discipline is designed to correct and should be viewed as valuable, for it seeks to awaken an individual to loss.
- 3) The flesh is at war with the Spirit meaning that the fleshly “Old Man” battles the spiritual “New Creation.” The soul connects to both the flesh and Spirit thus affecting our decisions. Decisions, which are made in the soul, are influenced by both the flesh and the Spirit. It is because of these influences from different sources that decisions are required. Hopefully, they will be made with accurate evaluations of the circumstances of life.
- 4) Confession reopens the communication lines with God. It is like a telephone line that is connected but not being used. Confession is like dialing the number. Dialing the right number is confessing known sins. Dialing the wrong number is compared to saying we have no sin.

c. Communication – occurs during Phase 2:

Communication with God brings cleansing as we walk in the light (1 John 1:7), which is a process that is accomplished by making righteous decisions over time. It is therefore relative to the amount and quality of the conversations (1 Thes 4:1-8).

Communication involves interaction with God through study of His Word (2 Tim 2:15), prayer (1 Thes 5:17), and letting His Word speak in such a way so that our lives are changed (John 7:16-18). Acts of faith of this nature broaden the potential for intimacy with God, in a manner similar to what King David possessed (Psa 139:23-24). It builds up the individual through the dialogue of listening to Him through the written Word and then responding to Him in prayer.

Communication involves the priestly function of praise (Heb 13:15-16), and accepts His written word as authoritative for matters of life and godliness (2 Tim 3:16-17). It is worthy of our study.

Learning how to pray is important to this process. One approach to a time of prayer is the PAPA prayer.

- **Present** yourself for inspection (Rom 12:1-3).
- **Adjust** what you can (Heb 12:1-3).
- **Purify** yourself (1 Pet 1:13-16).
- **Approach** the throne (Heb 4:8-16).

d. Connection – occurs during Phase 2:

Connection involves ongoing interaction with God and others, which is relative to the degree we listen, walk, abide, and produce fruit while serving as a priest to God (1 John 1:6-7; Rom 12:1-3). It is not for Him to know us because He already does, but it is for us to seek to know Him with all our heart (Psa 119:1-2). A personal desire to fully connect with God believes that He gives encouragement, consolation, fellowship, affection, and compassion (Php 2:1-2).

Fellowship with other Christians is important because it plays a role in the cleansing of sins described as “*walking in the light*” (1 John 1:7). Sins are identified because they often come to the surface through

interaction with others. Isolation does not permit the Believer to truly find out what is inside the soul because it is not tested. Sharing Christ's sufferings, often through dealing with other Christians, establishes an area of common ground with our Lord (Php 3:9-11; 1 Pet 4:12-13).

There are many opportunities for fellowship with God and others, such as:

- working together to spread the Gospel (Php 1:3-5).
- sharing the grace received with other Christians (Phle 4-6).
- sharing spiritual and material things (Rom 15:27).
- assembling together (Acts 2:42).
- praising God for the calling another has received (Gal 2:9-10; 1 John 1:3).
- sharing material things (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:3-4; 9:13-14; Rom 12:13; Php 4:15-16; 1 Tim 6:18-19).
- sharing in business together (Luke 5:10).
- sharing good things with your teacher (Gal 6:6).
- sharing the spiritual workload (2 Cor 8:23; Phle 17).
- sharing the sufferings and comfort of others (2 Cor 1:6-7; Heb 10:32-34).

Sharing in evil deeds is fellowship, but not Spiritual Fellowship (2 John 10-11; Matt 23:30), because Spiritual Fellowship has a responsibility of righteousness. This kind of fellowship shares responsibility for the sins committed (1 Tim 5:22).

Just like other functions of life, fellowship involves choices which can be good or bad (1 Cor 10:18-20).

e. Completion – occurs in eternity in Phase 3:

Complete fellowship occurs in eternity which is absolute and fully intimate (Php 1:6; John 17:3). There will be no pressure to have fellowship because all our questions will be answered (1 Cor 13:9-12).

Since there will be no sin there will be no damaged fellowship, including superficial, hypocritical, or phony relationships (Rev 21:1-8).

Our walk will no longer be by faith, but by sight, so there are no uncertainties in ourselves or others that often affect the intimacy of relationships (1 John 3:1-2; 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 3:20-22).

Our High Priest's prayer will be answered in full and Believers will have the oneness with The Living God (John 17, especially 17:25-26).

Those who have labored together will have a special fellowship in eternity (1 Pet 5:1).

C. Connecting with the Trinity Through Faith, Hope, and Love

1. Fellowship with the Trinity Grows, as a Person Matures as a Christian (1 Thes 1:2-3)

Faith, Hope, and Love are measures of Fellowship and without them Fellowship will never be close. Satan tries to counterfeit this fellowship by offering Believers what they already have, like fame, fortune, power and pleasure, but through sinful means. God has given Believers everything needed for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3).

2. Faith, Hope, and Love Are the Primary Standards of Perseverance in the "Last Days" (1 Thes 5:1-11)

a. Faith is the present assurance of the fulfilled promises of God (Heb 6:11-12).

b. Hope is confident expectation concerning fulfillment of the future promises of God (Rom 8:24-25).

c. Love is a response to the Lord through the expression of spiritual qualities, believing they are the best way to live life and expecting good results (Rom 12:9-21; 1 Cor 13:4-8).

3. Through Faith in the Son, the Spirit Connects Believers to the Father

This provides great potential for fellowship with each member of the Trinity (Heb 11:1,6; 2 Cor 5:1-10). Faith is damaged when we walk without spiritual sight with our eyes on the world or consider circumstances as coincidences or accidents. It is also damaged when no value is seen in living a righteous life and producing the fruit of the Spirit.

a. The Holy Spirit is in each Believer, but each must submit to Him to realize the relationship (Rom 8:9-11; 2 Tim 1:14; Jas 4:5-7).

- b. **Believers are sealed into the Son but He still must be “formed” in each Believer** (Eph 1:13; Gal 4:19; Php 2:5-8).
 - c. **Believers are in the plan of the Father, but each must consciously seek to recognize their place in that plan** (1 Cor 12:6).
- 4. **At Salvation, Believers Are Recipients of a Spiritual Gift and a Ministry that Is Designed to Have Impact** (1 Cor 12:4-7)
 - a. **Believers receive a Spiritual Gift, bestowed by The Holy Spirit.**
 - b. **Believers receive a ministry, bestowed by The Son.**
 - c. **Believers have an impact, coordinated by The Father** (John 5:17).
 - d. **All functions are designed for the good of the Body.**
- 5. **Results Are Designed by God and Desired for Each Believer** (Eph 2:10)
 - a. **The Spiritual Gift should produce fruit** (Gal 5:22-23).
 - b. **The priesthood should embrace a ministry** (Heb 13:15-16).
 - c. **The impact is in the Believer’s ambassadorship to both unbelievers and Believers** (2 Cor 5:18-21).
- 6. **Faith Focuses on the Object of the Faith, the Executor, Jesus Christ**
 Jesus Christ is our High Priest and Teacher (Rabbi). Thus for a Believer to follow Him he must be teachable and become able to teach (Heb 12:1-2; 2 Tim 2:2; Heb 5:12). Therefore, a local church should focus on teaching the Word and the individual application is to be taught in order to become a teacher.
- 7. **Love is Brought by the Revealer of God’s Plan, the Holy Spirit**
 The Holy Spirit establishes fellowship and gives Spiritual Gifts. Therefore to rely on the Holy Spirit is to submit to His holiness so that greater fellowship and use of a Believer’s Spiritual Gift may occur for the purpose of a greater relationship with God and One Another. A church should have spiritual fellowship among its members (Php 2:1; 1 Cor 12:13; 1 Pet 4:10; Mark 12:29-31). The application is to embrace God’s Love and let it transform each individual to spread the Love to others.
- 8. **Hope Is Focused on the Planner, the Father**
 The Father has the ability to work all things together for good in accordance with His Word. A growing relationship with each member of the Trinity builds our Hope. A church that has Faith, and Loves God and others, should be willing to share the Hope that is in them, which means being evangelistic (2 Cor 3:12-18; Rom 8:18-30). The application is to leave what is comfortable for the purpose of telling others about the Lord Jesus.
- 9. **Faith, Hope, and Love Are Not Exclusively Tied to a Particular Member of the Godhead**
 They are One, thus all participate in teaching, fellowship, and evangelism.
- 10. **A Growing Love for God and Others Is the Primary Evidence of this Relationship** (1 Cor 13:13)
- 11. **Love Is the Proper Use of Our Freedom** (Gal 5:1; Gal 5:13-15)
- 12. **Our relationship Should Grow with Each Member of the Godhead**
 As this relationship grows, we will understand God’s Plan, its execution, and illumination to a greater degree. This relationship is manifested by:
 - a. **a greater use of an individual’s Spiritual Gift to edify the Body** (1 Cor 14:26).
 - b. **a greater function of the priesthood seeking to imitate our Great High Priest** (Heb 13:15-16 cf. 1 Cor 11:1).
 - c. **an expansion of our ambassadorship to carry the Father’s message to a lost and dying world** (2 Cor 5:18-21).
- 13. **The “Fruit of the Spirit” is Designed to Edify Relationships Through Virtuous Works** (Gal 5:22-24)

14. Faith, Hope, and Love Are Interrelated to Each Other

Faith builds Hope, which is expressed in Love. Love strengthens Hope, which builds Faith.

15. Comments about Faith, Hope, and Love from Each New Testament Epistle

In chronological order:

James – While there is no specific reference to Hope, there is an implication from the prophecies of the book. The recipients need to build their Hope.

- a. Faith is tested to produce spiritual maturity (Jas 1:2-4).
- b. Love will be rewarded (Jas 1:12).
- c. Hope needs to be built, especially for the difficult times of the last days (Jas 5:1-7).

Galatians – Hope is only mentioned once (Gal 5:5-7).

- a. Faith is mentioned 22 times. Faith builds patience, which builds Hope.
- b. Faith working through Love is what really matters, this will produce a greater Hope.

1 Thessalonians – The model church is defined by its Faith, Hope, and Love (1 Thes 1:3).

- a. It involves “works of Faith” so Faith that is manifested is divine good. Those who claim to believe it should live it.
- b. Love is active in its expression, appearing as labor.
- c. Hope is the true result of patient Faith.

2 Thessalonians – Hope was omitted from their commendation in this epistle. It is a warning that false prophets (2 Thes 1:3-4) can harm a model church’s Hope.

- a. False prophecy harms Hope (2 Thes 2:1-2).
- b. True prophecy restores it (2 Thes 2:16-17).

1 Corinthians – They are commended for having Spiritual Gifts sovereignly given by the Holy Spirit, but there is no commendation for Faith, Hope, and Love.

- a. This church is deemed “carnal,” meaning they are acting like the unsaved (1 Cor 3:1-3).
- b. They are specifically exhorted to function in Faith, Hope, and Love (1 Cor 13:13).

2 Corinthians – Their walk in Faith, Hope, and Love has been restored (2 Cor 1:24; 1:10; 8:7).

Romans – They have a model Faith, a potential for Hope, and a call to spiritual Love (Rom 1:8; 15:13; 5:5; 12:9).

Ephesians – They are commended because of their Faith and Love, while being exhorted to build their Hope (Eph 1:15-19).

Philippians – They are showing progress in the Faith, while abounding in Love, with Hope being modeled by Paul (Php 1:25-26; 1:9-10; 1:19-20).

Colossians – They receive a commendation as another model church (Col 1:3-5).

1 Timothy – Pastors are to teach the need for pure Love and a sincere Faith that is set on The Hope who is Jesus Christ (1 Tim 1:5 cf. 1:1-2).

2 Timothy – Even pastors need to be reminded of the need for a sincere Faith, not permitting their Love to decrease and thus putting their Hope in jeopardy (2 Tim 1:5-8). (Hope is not mentioned directly in this epistle although it is modeled by Paul who knows he will receive the crown of righteousness.)

Titus – Faith accepts God’s calling, Hope is based on the promise of eternity, and Love for God and others should be the response (Titus 1:1-2; 2:1-4).

Philemon – He was commended for his Love and Faith, but his Hope received no comment indicating he did not have a correct view of the future (Phle 4-6).

1 Peter – God is to be blessed for His mercy because we are born to a living Hope through Faith that can endure in Love (1 Pet 1:3-9).

2 Peter – Faith should lead others to Love. Hope is not mentioned but is implied as a desired result (2 Pet 1:4-8).

Hebrews – Faith draws near to God, Hope must be held on to, and Love needs to be stimulated in other Christians (Heb 10:19-25).

1 John – Faith in Jesus the Messiah is what overcomes the world. True Hope seeks to be purified and Love is obedient (1 John 5:4-5; 3:1-3; 5:2-3).

2 John – Seek to Love One Another. The words Faith and Hope are not found but their need is implied for Love to occur. (2 John 1:4-5).

3 John – Gaius the Elder is commended for his Faith and Love (3 John 1:5-6).

The Book of Revelation – The word “Hope” is not found in this book but it is full of the information a Believer needs to possess it. The entire book is prophecy which is designed to build Hope for the future (Rev 1:3).

Ephesus – Their problem is that they had left their Love for One Another (Rev 2:4).

Smyrna – They receive a commendation for their Faith, with the inference of possessing a spiritual Love for One Another (Rev 2:10; Jas 1:12).

Pergamum – Some in that church kept the Faith (Rev 2:13).

Thyatira – With all the problems, some are still commended on their Love and Faith (Rev 2:19).

Sardis – This church is exhorted to keep what remains. In context it refers to the Love and Faith from the previous era of The Church (Rev 3:2).

Philadelphia – They kept His Word, which is designed to express Love for Him through obedience (Rev 3:8).

Laodicea – This church Loves the world and will receive loving discipline for their lack of zeal (Rev 3:19).

16. Conclusion

Faith, Hope, and Love are the three primary measures of the maturity of a Christian and a local church.

D. The Function of Spiritual Gifts

1. The Complete List of Spiritual Gifts Is Found in These Passages (Please look up 1 Corinthians 12:8-10,28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11 and Romans 12:5-7).

Peter considers the Spiritual Gifts in two main categories; that of speaking and serving (1 Pet 4:10-11). The “Speaking Gifts” require reverence while the “Service Gifts” require stewardship. Both are given by the Holy Spirit so they are not to be used in a carnal manner as a “work of the flesh” but as a ministry of the Holy Spirit from within each Believer (Gal 5:19-23). Both types of gifts are to gain strength from God. There are different ways to view the Spiritual Gifts that are described by Scripture, but in general they are Speaking and Service Gifts.

Each list of Gifts teaches different important principles:

- 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 teaches the importance of an attitude of unity of the Body.
- 1 Corinthians 12:28 teaches the value of differences in the Body.
- Ephesians 4:11 teaches the need to equip the Body.
- 1 Peter 4:10-11 teaches that the Body must be motivated to glorify God.
- Romans 12:5-7 teaches the importance of encouraging the use of the Gifts.

Look up each of these passages and become familiar with them so references will not need to be quoted every time they are mentioned in this section.

A Spiritual Gift is a God-given ability to excel in a different area of service within the Body of Christ. It is different from a talent or human ability (which comes with natural birth) in that Jesus Christ established the Spiritual Gifts (Eph 4:11) and God the Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes them to each Believer who enters the Body of Christ (Eph 2:19-22) at the moment of salvation (1 Cor 12:11,18).

It is important to realize that all Spiritual Gifts are to function in love (see 1 Corinthians 13) and that they are designed to serve others (1 Pet 4:10-11). The Apostle Paul made it clear in 1 Corinthians that even though there are Spiritual Gifts given by the Holy Spirit, they can be used in a fleshly way to draw attention to oneself and become arrogant (1 Cor 1:7,11; 3:1-3). Spiritual Gifts are to be used to build up The Church, not to cause divisions and confusion (1 Cor 14:12-13,33). Some in the church in Corinth were clearly using the Gift of Languages to draw attention to themselves, in a carnal way. Some people may use the Gift of Teaching for the same reason. The Holy Spirit gives the Spiritual Gift but the receiver of the gift may misuse it.

Spiritual Gifts were given to The Church, which began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). On that day the priesthood changed from the tribe of Levi into a royal priesthood and the standards of conduct changed (Heb 7:12). Some gifts were designed to lay the foundation (Eph 2:19-20) so that The Church could begin, be built up, and stabilized (1 Cor 14:40). These gifts were called “sign” gifts and were designed to evangelize the unbeliever and stabilize the new Believer (1 Cor 14:20-22) until Scripture for the new dispensation of The Church could be written. They were temporary and not needed after they accomplished their designed functions in the early Church, so they disappeared (1 Cor 13:8-10). Other gifts were designed for the function of The Church after it passed the “infancy” stage (1 Cor 13:11-13) of spiritual growth and therefore became permanent. These involve gifts that communicate God’s Word and serve others (1 Pet 4:10-11).

Believers are instructed that the gifts of “Prophecy,” “Languages,” and the “Word of Knowledge” will be done away when the “perfect” comes (1 Cor 13:8-10). Since those Spiritual Gifts will be done away, then the counterpart gifts of “Distinguishing of Spirits,” “Interpretation of Languages,” and “Word of Wisdom” will also disappear because they function in union with the previously mentioned gifts. Notice that all of these gifts concern communication and teach its importance. When the Book of Revelation was written, the Gift of Prophecy was closed for The Church Age (Rev 22:18-19). Therefore, the “perfect” must be the completed, God-breathed, inspired Word of God. No more new information was needed for The Church because the revelation to The Church was complete. The teaching gifts then focused on the communication of what had been revealed through the written Word that became the New Testament. As we have seen in an earlier chapter the early church fathers quoted all but a few verses of the New Testament in their writings.

Revelation 21:14 indicates that there were only twelve apostles. While it is clear that other people held a position that was called “apostle,” it did not mean that person possessed the gift but instead possessed a delegated authority from an Apostle called by the Lord (compare Gal 1:19; the Lord’s brother was not one of the original twelve Apostles). It is clear that this Spiritual Gift was limited and temporary. Someone might still be called an “apostle” due to holding an office in the church, but the Spiritual Gift no longer exists.

The gifts of “Healing” and “Miracles” were also temporary as evidenced by their usage in the New Testament. God still is able and He does heal people and perform miracles, but not through a Spiritual Gift given to an individual. The Lord still answers prayers for healing, but the function of these temporary gifts was based on the decision of the person possessing the gift, not the recipient. Those with the Gift of Healing could call on the Lord and healing would occur (Acts 3:6-10; 5:12-16; 9:34-35). Many recipients did not even know they were going to be healed until the healing was done, so it was not simply a matter of the strength of the Faith the “healed” possessed but rather the power of the gift (John 5:5-18). These gifts were used in the early Church to draw attention and to authenticate the message of the resurrected Christ (Acts 8:1-7, 39-40; 13:4-12; 14:1-4; 19:11-12) that was being transmitted to a new generation. The Believers’ love for One Another is the mature way of drawing attention to the message of Jesus Christ (John 13:34-35) and in a very real sense is a “Spiritual Gift” in that it is a “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23).

2. The Following Is a Summary of the Functions of Temporary Gifts

- a. **The Gift of Faith** (1 Cor 12:9) was a supernaturally great trust in the Lord in the face of seemingly impossible situations (1 Cor 13:2); (Please look up Acts 12:1-19).
- b. **The Word of Wisdom** (1 Cor 12:8) refers to supernatural instructions given for the application of Church Age Truth.
- c. **The Word of Knowledge** (1 Cor 12:8) was the supernatural utterance of direct information for The Church, not of a prophetic nature, which was to guide them until the New Testament was completed.
- d. **Healing** (1 Cor 12:9,28) was the supernatural, immediate and total physical healing of individuals from various medical conditions.
- e. **Miracles** (1 Cor 12:10, 28) was the supernatural setting aside of the normal natural laws and was viewed in conjunction with healing and the casting out of demons (Acts 19:11-12).
- f. **Prophecy** (1 Cor 12:10,28; Rom 12:6; Eph 4:11) was the supernatural ability to foretell information in The Church concerning the near and distant future (Acts 11:27-28).
- g. **The Gift of Distinguishing of Spirits** (1 Cor 12:10) was used to evaluate false teachers and false prophets (1 Cor 14:32).
- h. **Tongues/Languages** (1 Cor 12:10,28) was the supernatural ability to speak a human language that had not been previously learned.

- i. **Interpretation of Tongues/Languages** (1 Cor 12:10) was the supernatural ability to translate human languages that had not been previously learned.
- j. **Apostle** (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11) was a Spiritual Gift held by only twelve men (Rev 21:14) who were handpicked by Christ Himself and not man (Luke 6:13-16; Acts 9:15; Gal 1:1).

These temporary gifts were vital for the first century Church because they established an early system of accountability to protect, receive, confirm and spread new information given to The Church, prior to the completion of the Canon of Scripture. They were given for the common good of The Church (1 Cor 12:7).

Today, while there may be unique instances where one or more of these gifts appear to function, it may be a special empowering of the Holy Spirit for an unusual set of circumstances. It is not the Spiritual Gift described in Scripture otherwise it would function every time the recipient of the gift chose to use it. It is still true that God can and does heal, and at times miraculously. If a person had the Gift of Healing they could visit a hospital and immediately heal all the sick, whether or not the patients had Faith.

3. There Are Permanent Spiritual Gifts Which Are Operational Today and Need More Explanation

- a. **The Gift of Giving** (Rom 12:8) teaches important principles that underlie the function of all the Spiritual Gifts. It seeks the well-being of others (Rom 1:11-12). It is sacrificial in nature (Luke 3:11). It has a desire to share with others (Eph 4:28). It gives not just from material things but from personal assets, like time (1 Thes 2:8). It is truly generous (2 Cor 8:1-2) and promised a reward (2 Cor 9:10-15).
- b. **The Gift of Service** (Rom 12:7; 1 Pet 4:11) is the supernatural ability to carry out the physical functions of ministry in a practical manner. It is the gift that is able to complete various tasks that are assigned.
- c. **The Gift of Helps** (1 Cor 12:28) is the supernatural ability to assist other gifts, not to necessarily complete a task but to help along the way. It is probably the most diverse of the gifts.
- d. **The Gift of Leadership** (Rom 12:8) is the supernatural ability to guide and direct individuals in the accomplishment of the ministries of the local church. It is a visionary gift that focuses on leading others to "good deeds" (Titus 3:5-8,14).
- e. **The Gift of Administration** (1 Cor 12:28) is the supernatural ability to organize and oversee the resources of the local church. It assists other ministries so they are done "honorably and in an organized manner" (1 Cor 14:40).
- f. **The Gift of Mercy** (Rom 12:8) is the supernatural ability to recognize and get help for those in spiritual or physical need. Some of the other gifts will often be the ones to best help those in need.
- g. **The Gift of Exhortation** (Rom 12:8) is the supernatural ability to have a word or action that is fitting for the need of the moment. It can be manifested in exhortation to do the right thing, encouragement to keep doing the right thing or comfort in the midst of trials.
- h. **The Gift of Teaching** (1 Cor 12:28; Rom 12:7) is the supernatural ability to take what has been revealed and make it understandable to a given audience. It is responsible for the education of the Body of Christ. Every Believer should be a teacher (Heb 5:12), but some have the Spiritual Gift that empowers them to excel.
- i. **The Gift of Evangelism** (Eph 4:11) is the supernatural ability to make the gospel clearly understandable to a given audience. This gift is designed to get new souls into the Kingdom.
- j. **The Gift of Pastor-Teacher** (Eph 4:11) is the supernatural ability to shepherd God's flock through teaching and applying the Word. It is the primary nurturing gift in the local church.

From looking at these gifts it is easy to see that there are spiritual motivations and strategies to their function. It is summarized in the following chart:

Spiritual Gift	Motivation	Strategy
Giving	Physical Support	Give
Service	Complete Tasks	Perseverance
Helps	Assist others	Seek Opportunities
Leadership	Direction	Vision
Administration	Efficiency	Organization
Mercy	Identify Needs	Respond
Exhortation	Emotional Support	Enlist others
Teaching	Explanation	Study
Evangelism	Expansion	Exploration
Pastor-Teacher	Affirmation	Counsel

It is also easy to document that all Spiritual Gifts are to function in love (please look up 1 Cor 13:4-7; Rom 12:9-16) and each has a response to God's love and becomes an example of it. This is expressed in the following chart:

Spiritual Gift	The Love Response
Giving	Thanksgiving for Love
Service	Actions of Love
Helps	Humility of Love
Leadership	Opportunities to Love
Administration	Efficiency to Love
Mercy	Depth of Love
Exhortation	Encouragement of Love
Teaching	Explanation of Love
Evangelism	The Spread of Love
Pastor-Teacher	Assurance of Love

4. Conflicts That May Occur Regarding Spiritual Gifts

Some clear conclusions about Spiritual Gifts may be drawn. It is amazing how divisive the issue of temporary and permanent gifts has become among Christians over the last century. The real issue concerns whether or not love is displayed among Believers. Emotions run very high on both sides of this issue. In addition to Spiritual Gifts, The Church has also managed to divide over church government, the Lord's Table and Baptism, just to name a few issues. This should not be the case.

Often there is a "rush to judgment" toward One Another instead of fully considering the other position. Therefore, let us take time to fully consider the evidence before making a hasty judgment.

Many times each side addresses the subject of Spiritual Gifts from an attitude of fear, hatred, or arrogance. These sins lead to some inherent flaws in the discussion. The goal of any Biblical instruction must be ***"love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions"*** (1 Tim 1:5-7)." Believers from both viewpoints may deem some portions of these conclusions heretical. Some, however, will consider, evaluate, adopt and grow in the love of Jesus Christ.

Scripture tells us to not make an issue of Spiritual Gifts, but instead have care for One Another (1 Cor 12:24-25), so the real issue of Spiritual Gifts is the display of love to edify The Church (1 Cor 13:4-8a; 14:1,5,12,17; Rom 14:19). Let the Believer first ask if the love of Christ controls them in their use of the Spiritual Gifts (2 Cor 5:14-15)? Love tests the correct function of any Spiritual Gift so are we Believers willing to give our brother the same grace consideration that we desire for ourselves?

The last place that we would want to find ourselves is "fighting against God," because we have taken a Pharisaic, self-righteous stand. If Believers love One Another as God loves them, then condemnation will not occur even though there is disagreement with the attitudes or actions of a brother in Christ that are not clearly sinful. No Believer is any less a brother or sister in Christ for their beliefs on Spiritual Gifts than the

Believer who is involved in works of the flesh (Acts 5:38-39; Gal 5:19-21), but is still a Believer. Is the brother or sister in Christ to be loved? Without question! (1 John 4:18). Is the brother or sister to be feared? Absolutely not! (1 John 4:18).

Fear frequently comes from what is not understood or what is afraid to be lost. Many profess to care only for what God thinks, but actually they fear being wrong and looking bad in front of other people. All those who truly seek the things of the Spirit of God through His Word, without fear, will eventually come to the same conclusions. The greatest problem is pride. God is not the author of confusion, Satan is (1 Cor 14:33). Are Believers not all indwelt by the same Holy Spirit? Believers do not live a holy life when they are trying to degrade another Christian for their position on various questionable things.

5. **Comments and Suggestions That May Help Lead Toward a Peaceful Resolution of the Theological Differences In the Body of Christ Concerning Spiritual Gifts**

Clearly, there is a problem with division in the Body of Christ, and God does not desire division (1 Cor 12:24b-25), but at times division within His Body must occur (Rom 16:17-18). God calls The Body of Christ to preserve the unity of the Spirit (Eph 4:1-6), so the first part of resolution of this problem must begin with an attitude of love toward One Another. This attitude does not have to agree with the other's position but must extend grace toward those who think differently about spiritual things. The call is to personally extend to others the same grace that we would desire from them (Matt 7:12).

Problems always stem from a lack of love for fellow Christians. Believers can easily become more interested in who is right rather than what is right. When this kind of problem occurs it inherently means a person is more interested in the messenger of Truth than in the Truth itself. The Truth is found in the person of Jesus Christ (John 14:6) whose words became the standard for sound doctrine (1 Tim 6:3-5). On both sides of the issue, the opposition to One Another often runs from mere tolerance to outright disgust and hatred. Both groups often think that the other side is lost, yet the Bible says ***"whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life"*** (John 3:16). 'Whosoever' is not a difficult word to understand, for even in the Greek it means 'Whosoever.' Salvation is based on belief in the Son's work on the cross and resurrection (1 Cor 15:1-3), so the "whosoever" fall into many different theological areas. All the "whosoever" who have accepted Jesus Christ, are brothers and sisters with all other "whosoever" who have also accepted Him.

It should be obvious that the Lord is more interested in whether Believers "love One Another" than whether or not they agree on everything (1 John 2:9-11; 4:19-21). After all, this is the greatest evangelistic tool given to men (John 13:34-35). Honorable Believers must consider the cost of the battles within The Church because the unsaved look at Christians fighting with One Another (Gal 5:14-15) instead of serving One Another (Gal 5:13). Often the unsaved do not want any part of this "religion" (Gal 5:13-15). As previously stated, let us learn to treat One Another the way we would want to be treated (Matt 7:12). By application, it is valid to pray that the Lord "correct others," if we are willing to honestly pray the same for ourselves. What do you think would happen to the Body of Christ if Believers spent as much time praying that error would be corrected in themselves or others, as is done criticizing One Another?

Problems often stem from a lack of understanding of Scripture. The Scribes and Pharisees of the first century arrogantly thought they fully understood the Law, but ended up demanding our Lord's crucifixion. Their real problem was adding to what the Word had said through their ***"traditions of the elders"*** (Mark 7:1-3). Jesus points out that they should have been seeking the author of the Law rather than holding to the letter of it (John 5:37-44). They knew a lot of Scripture, but did not know the Author. Those who do not desire to live the Word will never fully understand it (John 7:17-18). Our God looks on the hearts of men and has given us a "Royal Law" to fulfill (Jas 2:8; Matt 7:12).

The solution to the problems of adding to God's Word has to be found in His Word. All Believers must continue to seek the Truth, which comes from the Holy Spirit, whose role is to reveal the Son (John 15:26-27; 16:12-15). No matter what position one holds, the Truth is found in the person of the Son.

Let us try to understand each other. This comes from the Biblical exhortation to "honor One Another" (Rom 12:10). In fact, if we would learn and understand the Biblical principles of "One Another" we might just learn to unify and take the Gospel to a lost and dying world. We can work on our disagreements in the process.

E. Key Principles of Relationships (One Another)

As discussed in a previous section, fellowship with God comes in stages with varying degrees. These same principles apply to relationships with people. Contact begins with God at salvation and is the basis for learning to love One Another; Confession of sins is often needed because of a violation of one or more of these principles; Communication is evidenced by the acceptance of these principles from God as valid and therefore praying for their realization in life; Connection with God comes from the degree these principles are practiced by oneself and others; the Complete living of these principles will be in eternity when we finally get them right. Relationships with people follow the same process of Contact, Confession, Communication, Connection, with the Completion of relationship in eternity.

1. The True Christian Life Embraces the Biblical Principles of “One Another,” in Fulfillment of the Royal Law

These principles are specific applications of love (Jas 2:8; Matt 7:12). The Greek word ALLELON is translated “One Another” and means “One Another of the same kind.” A simple word study (comparing the uses of a particular word throughout a Testament) of the New Testament indicates that the “same kind” refers to humanity as a whole and not to a specific group within humanity, like Believers only. The word does not refer to Believers only to the exclusion of unbelievers, but it is especially concerned with practice toward other members of the Body of Christ (Rom 12:10; 1 Tim 5:8).

2. Mature Believers Embrace These One Another Principles to Serve Others, While Immature Believers Use Them to Try to Get Others to Serve Them (Gal 5:13)

- a. **Application of One Another principles will not be easy because the world attacks them (John 15:18-19).**
- b. **Each Believer must stand before the Lord Jesus Christ to give an account (2 Cor 5:10).**
- c. **To disregard One Another principles or not recognize their value indicates a love of the world (1 John 2:15).**
- d. **The choice belongs to each individual Believer, whether to stand before Him with confidence or, to stand before Him in shame (1 John 2:28).**

3. The Command to “Love One Another” Is Found in Many Verses in the New Testament, but Is Originally Found in the Old Testament (Lev 19:17-18; John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; Rom 13:8; 1 Thes 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thes 1:3; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11,12; 2 John 1:5)

This means that Christians are to seek to live the qualities that describe love, especially those found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and Romans 12:9-21.

- a. **This love is the translation of the Greek word “AGAPE” which means to do what is right and best even if it involves unpleasant feelings. The Greek word group that comes from “PHILEO” contains more the idea of friendship love.**
- b. **“Loving One Another” is the “Second Greatest Commandment” and is required to fulfill the “Greatest Commandment” (Mark 12:29-31 cf. 1 John 4:20).**
- c. **Loving One Another is the summary statement of all the other principles, just like the commands to love are the summary of the entire Mosaic Law (Gal 5:14).**

4. One Another Attitudes: Love Through Connection

- a. **Believers should recognize that they are “Members of One Another,” meaning that there is already a family relationship as part of the “Body of Christ” (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25).**

Principle: Believers have a responsibility to speak the truth in love to each other as members of the same body.

- b. **Believers are to “Think the Same toward One Another,” meaning to recognize others as fellow recipients of God’s grace (Rom 12:16; 15:5), and not function arrogantly toward them (Jas 2:1-4).**

Principle: All Believers are here to glorify God with one voice (Rom 15:6).

- c. **Believers are to “Accept One Another,” just as Christ accepted them as creatures in need of His grace (Rom 15:7).**

The Greek word translated “accept” is PROSLAMBANO which means to “take to your face” signifying a special interest on the part of the receiver. The standard is “just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God.”

Principle: Believers are not to try to impose legalisms or opinions on each other.

- d. **Believers are to “Consider One Another More Important” than ourselves** (Php 2:3).
The example is our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a call to view the needs of others as more important than our desires and even at times our own needs, rights or privileges.
Principle: Believers are to learn to sacrifice for the benefit of others.
- e. **Believers are to “Bear with One Another,” which means being patient with each other** (Eph 4:2; Col 3:13).
The Greek word translated “bear with” is ANECHOMAI which means to “hold up” and endure.
Principle: Believers need to learn patience toward circumstances and people.
- f. **Believers are to “Submit to One Another,” which means to recognize others’ needs first** (Eph 5:21).
The Greek word translated “submit” is HUPOTASSO which means to “stand under,” specifically authority. The principle is for authorities and subordinates as well.
Principle: Believers are not to seek to present themselves as better than others.
- g. **Believers are to “Forgive One Another,” just as the Lord forgave them** (Col 3:12-13).
The Lord established the standard of forgiveness. It is a test of love that is not designed to be easy. Some believe that forgiveness is only necessary if the person who wronged them repents. While their failure to repent usually prevents close fellowship, it should not determine whether or not the injured party forgives.
Forgiveness does not mean that a person should be automatically restored to a leadership position when there has been a major failure resulting in disqualification from office. The damaged reputation needs to be rebuilt over time.
Principle: Believers are expected to not hold grudges against others.
- h. **Believers are to “Consider how to stimulate One Another to Love and Good Deeds.” This involves thinking about how others may be helped and urging all to action** (Heb 10:24-25).
This principle involves thinking in an unselfish manner and assembling for the purpose of encouragement.
Principle: Believers are called to think about how to encourage others to live the Christian life.
- i. **Believers are to “Eagerly Await One Another,” which refers to expecting a joy of association with other Believers** (1 Cor 11:33).
This principle denotes a lack of elitism and a mutual reverence for God.
Principle: Believers are to enjoy association with other members of the Body of Christ.
- j. **Believers are to “Care for One Another,” which means to be concerned for other members of the Body of Christ** (1 Cor 12:25).
The Greek word translated “care” is MERIMNA. It means “to draw in different directions” and in this use to be drawn away from the worldly viewpoint of caring only for self.
Principle: Believers should have a concern for the Body of Christ that seeks to unite it.
- k. **Believers are to be “Humble toward One Another,” which refers to changing any selfish attitudes possessed concerning each other** (1 Pet 5:5).
The Greek translated “humble” is TAPEINOPHROSUNE which is humbleness of mind.
Principle: Believers should adjust their minds to remove arrogance.

5. One Another Speech: Love Through Communication

- a. **Believers are to “Encourage One Another,” which involves helping them when they are spiritually down** (Rom 1:12; 1 Thes 4:18; 5:11; Heb 3:13; 10:25).
The Greek word translated “encourage” is PARAKALEO which means to “call alongside,” to encourage, comfort, counsel, or exhort. The meaning includes compassion and urges others to trust God.
Principle: Believers are to learn to use words that encourage others to join in the Christian walk.
- b. **Believers are to “Admonish One Another,” when they see spiritual danger approaching** (Rom 15:14).
In order to apply this correctly, we must be first full of goodness and filled with all knowledge. The Greek word translated “admonish” is NOUTHETEO and means to put in the mind, with emphasis on warning

via instruction. There is a definite need for wisdom under the ministry of the Holy Spirit to know whether the warning should be harsh or mild.

Principle: Believers are to first check their personal spiritual status, then be willing to warn others of approaching danger.

- c. **Believers are to “Confess Sins to One Another.” This involves apologies to the people personally wronged to bring peace to injured relationships** (Jas 5:16).

In the context of James, sins are considered spiritual sickness and admission of error is not a sign of weakness but of strength. This deals primarily with speech or actions that have harmed others and is designed to reestablish peace. It is wise to accompany it with prayer. This is not a call for people to gather for the purpose of confessing all their sins to One Another.

Principle: Believers are to be humble enough to admit when they have wronged someone.

6. One Another Actions: Love to Edify

- a. **Believers are to “Build Up One Another,” which involves encouragement and instruction to others** (Rom 14:19; 1 Thes 5:11).

This principle involves refraining from placing non-essential stumbling blocks before people, but mutually building spiritual sobriety and alertness. Biblically, Jesus Christ is called a “stumbling block” and if they trip over Him it is their problem (1 Cor 1:23).

Principle: Believers are to seek to help others in their Christian walk.

- b. **Believers are to “Fellowship with One Another”** (1 John 1:7), **which involves a mutual walking in the light.**

Principle: It is important to meet with other Believers who are spiritually advancing.

- c. **Believers are to be “Devoted to One Another,” which means they are to develop a tender affection for each other that includes commitment to the well-being of others** (Rom 12:10).

The Greek word translated “devoted” is PHILOSTORGOS which is natural tender affection as in a family and thus it is without hypocrisy.

Principle: Believers are to seek to be as close to others in the Body of Christ as they are to their own family.

- d. **Believers are to “Honor One Another,” meaning to recognize the value of others before God and give preference to their needs over unbelievers** (Rom 12:11).

Principle: Believers should recognize the value God has placed on members of the human race.

- e. **Believers are to “Greet One Another” with a “holy kiss.” This principle refers to the acknowledgement of the presence of a person in a culturally acceptable manner that appreciates their value to God** (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12-13; 1 Pet 5:14).

The Greek word translated “greet” is ASPADZOMAI and is better translated as “salute.”

Principle: Recognize other Believers in a culturally acceptable form.

- f. **Believers are to “Serve One Another” which is illustrated by the washing of another’s feet** (John 13:14; Gal 5:13).

The Lord set the standard.

Principle: There should be no task beneath Believers when it comes to serving others.

- g. **Believers are to “Bear the Burdens of One Another,” which means to help them deal with sin in their life** (Gal 6:1-2).

This involves the restoration to fellowship of a Believer. The motives must be right and Believers must seek wisdom concerning the method used to assist others in need. Believers must beware of losing personal fellowship with God from an attitude of self-righteousness or arrogance.

Principle: Believers are to be willing and able to help others recover from sin.

- h. **Believers are to “Be at Peace with One Another.” This means to seek to refrain from stirring up trouble with unimportant actions or opinions and extend this courtesy to all humanity** (Mark 9:50; Rom 12:18).

This is part of the Believers’ function as the “salt of the earth,” and requires flexibility on non-essentials. It includes preferences concerning diet and clothing.

Principle: Believers should refrain from stirring up trouble over Scripturally unimportant issues.

- i. **Believers are to “Pray for One Another”** (Jas 5:16).
The prayers can be in both a personal and corporate setting. They are not to be done from an attitude of self-righteousness but with each person praying for the welfare of others.
Principle: Believers should consistently intercede in prayer for others.
- j. **Believers are to “Seek Good for One Another,” meaning to desire each person to have a closer relationship with God** (1 Thes 5:15). **This specifically excludes vengeance** (Rom 12:19-21).
Principle: Believers should extend good to others so they may have a closer relationship with God.
- k. **Believers are to “Be Kind to One Another,” which involves the removal of bitterness, anger, and a desire to administer harm** (Eph 4:31-32).
Principle: Believers should consciously seek to show grace to others through kind actions.
- l. **Believers are to “Recognize One Another’s Service.” This means Believers should not serve for the purpose of man’s recognition, but honor others within God’s family for their service** (Luke 7:32).
Jesus’ analogy shows that it is wrong when one party serves another and the party served does not kindly respond.
Principle: Believers are to recognize the acts of others in service to our God.
- m. **Believers are to “Show Hospitality to One Another,” which means to welcome strangers into our assemblies** (1 Pet 4:9).
Complaints from Believers while serving does not show true hospitality to strangers. The Greek word translated “hospitality” is PHILOZENOS which means a love of strangers.
Principle: Believers should welcome other Believers into the assembly and take care of them.

7. **One Another Conditions that Harm or Destroy Relationships**

Many of the following passages concern unbelievers. Believers are not to act like unbelievers although they do at times (1 Pet 4:3-5). The following are actions which harm fellowship with One Another:

- a. **Betraying One Another.** (Matt 24:10)
This is a characteristic of the last days and involves giving one person over to another person who will inflict harm.
- b. **Hating One Another.**
This is the opposite of Loving One Another and is a characteristic of unbelievers (Matt 24:10; Titus 3:3).
- c. **Questioning grace provision with One Another.”**
This happens when Believers get their eyes on the things of the world and off the things of God (Mark 8:16; John 4:33).
- d. **Trying to gain an advantage over One Another.** (Mark 9:33-34)
- e. **Mocking Christ with One Another.** (Mark 15:31)
- f. **Conspiring with One Another to harm others.** (Luke 6:11; 23:12; Acts 4:15)
- g. **Being inconsiderate of One Another.** (Luke 12:1)
- h. **Seeking glory from One Another.** (John 5:44)
- i. **Grumbling with One Another.** (John 6:43)
- j. **Arguing with One Another.** (John 6:52)
- k. **Looking with accusation at One Another.** (John 13:21-22)
- l. **Distributing ill-gotten gain with One Another.** (John 19:23-24)
- m. **Injuring One Another.** (Acts 7:26)
- n. **Wrongful separation from One Another.** (Acts 15:36-39 cf. 9:26-27)
This occurs when one party is unforgiving of a past mistake and the other party is seeking reconciliation.
- o. **Bringing false charges against One Another.** (Acts 19:38)
- p. **Judging One Another.** (Acts 28:4; Rom 14:13)
This occurs when a Believer automatically attributes a harmful event to discipline or judgment. This often occurs when people use legalisms as the standard of evaluation.
- q. **Not agreeing with One Another on the truth of the Gospel.** (Acts 28:23-25 cf. Gal 1:6-8)

- r. **Lust for One Another.** (Rom 1:26-27)
This involves sexual lust of any kind outside the marriage bond.
- s. **Marriage partners sexually depriving One Another.** (1 Cor 7:4-5).
- t. **Devouring One Another.** (Gal 5:15)
This involves “chewing up” the time and/or resources of One Another.
- u. **Challenging One Another.** (Gal 5:26)
The Greek word translated “challenge” is PROKALEOMAI which means to challenge to combat or to an athletic contest. It is the type of argument that seeks to answer the question “who” is right rather than “what” is right.
- v. **Envyng One Another.** (Gal 5:26)
This means to desire what another person possesses. It can become an obsessive mental sin that is devastating to the Christian Life.
- w. **Lying to One Another.** (Col 3:9)
- x. **Speaking against One Another.** (Jas 4:11)
This focuses on the hostile intention behind the gossip (telling truth in order to damage a reputation) or slander (lying to damage a reputation) more than whether or not it is false. It involves assuming a position that supersedes the authority of Christ.
- y. **Complaining about One Another.** (Jas 5:9)
The Greek word for “complain” is STENADZO which refers to inner feelings of dissatisfaction that become verbal. This specifically looks at a lack of patience that overflows into verbal comments.
- z. **Killing One Another.** (Rev 6:4)
This is an extension of hating One Another and is applicable not only to literal murder but to mental and verbal murder as well.
- aa. **Happiness with One Another over another's death.** (Rev 11:10)

8. These Principles Apply to All Relationships!

These principles apply to every relationship, and should begin in the home with the husband and wife and extend to the family.

F. Discipleship

The Church is responsible to spread the Gospel (Luke 24:44-49). This means not only leading people to believe in Jesus as Messiah but also encouraging them to become His disciples. Some clear principles emerge from Scripture concerning the Believer's part in the spread of the good news.

- Believers should not be ashamed of the Gospel, meaning they should not be timid or embarrassed to present it (Rom 1:16).
- The Gospel is simple and clear so it should be clearly presented to others (1 Cor 1:17).
- Money should not be an issue in the proclamation of the Gospel (2 Cor 11:7-8).
- The Gospel is the same for Gentiles and Jews (Acts 13:48; 15:11; Rom 4:3; 9:32-33).
- The Church needs to realize that it can be flexible on the methods used to present the Gospel so that others might be saved (1 Cor 9:22; 10:32-33).
- The Gospel, when not accepted, may be forgotten (Luke 8:12).
- Evil fears that all will believe in Christ, so there will be opposition to the spread of the Gospel (John 11:48).

A disciple is a follower and student of a mentor, teacher, or wise person. The Greek noun for disciple is MATHETES which is used 261 times in the New Testament. The verb form is MATHETEUEO which is used only four times. The fact that the noun is used a lot more than the verb focuses on the desired result (a disciple), instead of the process of making them which can vary in methods at different times and in different cultures. Disciples are commanded to go and make other disciples. Let us recall the “Great Commission” recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, which reads, **“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”**

Let us consider the different elements of the Commission and begin with the phrase ***“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”*** The Lord Himself told His disciples that He has all authority. This should immediately humble the Lord’s disciple to seek the direction of The Master. The journey and task is not about authority to go, but rather His authority to send. Believers are ambassadors carrying a message of reconciliation from The King (2 Cor 5:18-21).

Next is the phrase, ***“Go therefore.”*** The Greek construction is not actually an imperative (a command) but an Aorist Participle, which is literally translated ***“having gone.”*** It does not command us to go, but views it a necessary step in fulfillment of the command, which will follow. So, the first step to making disciples is to ***“go”*** to them. It may be across the street or around the world, but it is a call for Christians to make contact with unbelievers.

The objective of the mission is to ***“make disciples.”*** This is the command. It is in the Aorist tense which looks at all the elements of discipleship. The Active voice means that Believers are to initiate action toward the desired end of making more disciples. The Imperative mood means it is a command and not an optional part of the Christian life. As previously noted a disciple is “a follower and student of a mentor, teacher, or wise person.” The desire is for more disciples who follow Jesus Christ, study His Word, and are teachable in spirit. Basic elements of discipleship are contained in the phrases that follow.

The target is ***“all the nations.”*** This is a call to leave behind any racial or political prejudice and take the message of peace to a lost and dying world. All peoples have eternity set in their hearts and have the concept of a Creator. It is the Believer’s task to tell them about Him (Eccl 3:11; Rom 1:18-20).

Those who want to be disciples should be baptized. While water baptism does not save (if the blood sacrifices of bulls and goats could not take away sins, what would make anyone think that a bloodless sacrifice like water could?), it is indeed an overt testimony that an individual has decided to follow as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The reality behind baptism is that it identifies the individual with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the faith placed in Him for salvation (Rom 6:3-6). This part of the Great Commission is about presenting the Gospel and encouraging the recipients to become a follower of the Lord. Baptism is to be done in the “name of” the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The word “name” is a reference to the Godhead’s reputation. It is the Father’s plan, the Son’s execution of that plan, and the Holy Spirit’s revelation of it. The simple application is that new disciples should know what they are doing when they are baptized. The ritual was not just to get wet.

The next element involves teaching. The teaching comes from the sound words of Jesus Christ Himself, which is the test of all doctrine (1 Tim 6:3). Jesus’ commandments all revolve around love for the Father and for One Another. It is not the letter of the old commandments that He was referring to but rather the spirit of the commands to love (Rom 7:6; 2 Cor 3:5-6).

The teaching does not involve simply intellectual knowledge of God’s Word but also the application of it to daily lives. The word for “observe” is the Greek word *TEREO* which means to keep or guard because it is valuable. The best way to teach others is to be an example.

The Great Commission closes with a promise for disciples. He has promised to be with the disciples whom He chose ***“always.”*** The writer of Hebrews applies this promise to all of us. The Lord will never leave nor forsake us. That means that He did not send us out on a mission alone, but that it is truly a “co-mission” that He leads (Heb 13:5-6).

Believers have an important calling. It will not be without its tests and trials, but it indeed can be more rewarding than anyone can ever think or imagine. May we be found by Him fulfilling our ministry when He returns (Matt 24:42-47).

The initial question asked in this chapter, “How does the Bible describe a transformed life?” is answered by seeing the importance of fellowship with the Trinity, a growing intimacy with the living God, and connection with Him through Faith, Hope, and Love. This transformation occurs as we use our Spiritual Gifts to glorify Him and seek growing relationships with other Believers. These relationships should seek more disciples to enter the family of God in order to pass on the heritage to the next generation.

Having seen the personal side of “How Then Shall We Live?” it is now time to consider the practical applications of the Christian Life to the local and Universal Church. No local church is perfect, and never will be, but it is each Christian’s exhortation to be a consistent, functioning part of a local assembly of Believers. While there are clearly tests associated with assembling with other Believers, there are blessings that cannot be received without it (Heb 10:24-25).

For Personal Study:

- ✓ **Discuss some of the commands given for the Christian walk.**
- ✓ **What are the five principles of fellowship and intimacy? Discuss.**
- ✓ **Describe the importance of Faith, Hope, and Love in the life of the Christian and The Church.**
- ✓ **What Spiritual Gift do you have?**
- ✓ **Is your Spiritual Gift functioning in love?**
- ✓ **If you disagree with the analysis of Spiritual Gifts, please offer a Biblical refutation.**
- ✓ **What is the key to being a disciple?**
- ✓ **How should discipleship be lived in the local church?**

Chapter 13

Transformation: Corporate Practical Applications

Transformation: Corporate Practical Applications

How Should We Seek to Live Within The Church?

God designed us to have a relationship with Him and One Another. This is clearly stated in the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:28-31). As seen on the **God Line** of the chart, **God** the Creator gave **Revelation** of Himself clearly through His accurately **inspired (Inspiration)** Word so that we could know and follow **His (Author's) Will** by learning the **Truth**. Once Jesus is accepted as the Messiah, our life should **change (Changed Life)** from serving ourselves to one of **Service** to God and others. Our lives will eventually be **Transformed** as we learn to **Love God and Others**. When these changes are made and we see the transformation in our personal lives, a real and abiding **Hope** and **Peace** will result. Scriptures make it clear that a real and abiding hope is a process that begins with salvation from the penalty for sins and then matures through hardship and difficulties. The Apostle Paul says it clearly in Romans 5:1-5:

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

If a person chooses to follow the **Matter Line** of the chart, they are **deceived (Deception)** into thinking that they can and must **Change** the **World** to be happy. By pursuing that course of action they will be consistently frustrated because they must **conform (Conformed)** to the world's standards to bring about change. The result is **Discontent** manifested in a frantic search for happiness that ultimately hopes that things of the world will one day bring them peace. These **Worldly Pursuits** will only leave them more **desperate (Desperation)** to find lasting solutions to human problems.

Believers tend to go back and forth from the **God Line** to the **Matter Line**, but hopefully by realizing how to identify worldly things, spiritual adjustments will be made and spiritual growth will continue (2 Pet 3:17-18). When the adjustment is made back to the **God Line**, even for a Believer who has reached a level of maturity, the thinking actually recognizes again that God is God and He has revealed Himself to us through His Word. Again, this change to recognizing God as the Creator may not be consciously done but is real just the same.

Scripture indicates that God gave The Church as a place to serve to help Believers grow through testing. Believers are called to come alongside other Believers and learn to love them and serve Him together. Some of the greatest tests in life are people tests. Believers can mistreat you in many ways, but He wants us to learn to live with each other in peace, as one body (see His prayer in John 17).

To function properly in the Christian life it is essential to understand the Biblical description of The Church. To accomplish this desire we must seek Scriptural answers to how God defines a church, when does it exist, how should it function, and what is the reason for it? We should also seek the Biblical distinctions between the local and universal Church.

A. The Biblical Description of The Church

1. Definitions

The Universal Church, which we will call, "The Church," is composed of Believers only from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture, who may or may not assemble themselves together in various geographical areas.

The term "local church" refers to those members of the Universal Church who assemble themselves together for the purposes of study of the Word of God and evangelism in a given geographical area.

2. Usages of the Greek Word, EKKLESIA

The classical usage of this word is based on the root meanings of the preposition "EK" and the verb "KALEO." "EK" means "out from" and "KALEO" means "to call," thus this word's root meaning is to "call out of." It is used outside of the Bible to describe, "an assembly of citizens summoned by the crier (announcer) in a

legislative assembly.”⁶⁷ The emphasis is not on the process of calling out the assembly, but on the completed assembly itself. As expected there are no theological uses in classical Greek since the technical meaning did not exist prior to its adoption by The Church. The word is not found with the definite article (the) until the Koine Greek of the New Testament. It is basically an “assembly” with two things in common. It is local and self-governing.

In the New Testament an EKKLESIA (the feminine noun form) is used to describe various assemblies (Acts 19:32,39,41)⁶⁸ that have nothing to do with The Universal Church.

In the Septuagint (also known as the LXX; the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament which is sometimes used to help understand the meaning of both Greek and Hebrew words), EKKLESIA is always used to translate the Hebrew QAHAL (77 times). QAHAL is used to refer to a particular meeting at a particular place. It is not a technical word with a limited or special meaning. QAHAL can be used in a specific sense for the redeemed nation of Israel.

Theologians who believe churches existed in Old Testament times claim that the Hebrew word QAHAL is the same as EKKLESIA and is technical for the redeemed nation of Israel. Simple investigation shows this is not true. The LXX does not use EKKLESIA consistently for a religious assembly and in fact uses it for an evil assembly (Psa 26:5) and a military assembly (Jer 50:9). Simply stated, the Hebrew word stresses an assembly of people in a given place with no special or figurative uses. For individuals to be members of an Old Testament assembly they must simply be present, so there is no valid place to read The Church back into the Old Testament based on a prevalent use of EKKLESIA in the Septuagint. The Hebrew word ‘EDAH is always translated by the Greek word SUNAGOGUE, meaning “synagogue.” Synagogue is used 130 times.

The New Testament uses EKKLESIA 115 times. Prior to the New Testament, this word was never used with the definite article “the” to become “The Church.” Only three of these uses are in the Gospels (Matt 16:18; 18:17 twice). Jesus’ words in Matthew 16:18 indicate that The Church, a new entity, is future to the time of speaking, so The Church did not begin prior to Jesus’ first coming.

The non-technical meaning of “assembly” is used three times in the New Testament to describe an assembly of idol-makers (Acts 19:32,39,41). These verses show the root meaning of the word in its normal Koine (Common) Greek context. EKKLESIA is used to describe a local church 91 times, most often with modifiers such as the church of the Thessalonians. The two main characteristics of a local church are physical and spiritual unity (Acts 11:22; 13:1).

EKKLESIA is also used to describe the Universal Church 19 times. The Universal Church is all about spiritual unity in Jesus Christ for it involves the “general assembly enrolled in heaven” (Heb 12:23). It has been referred to as an “unassembled assembly,” such as The Church that is in Judea, or in Galilee (Acts 9:31). The Universal Church is also known as The Spiritual Church, The Ideal Church, and the Invisible Church, which will be explained in the next section.

A list of the verses that mention the Universal Church is: Acts 9:31, 20:28; 1 Cor 15:9, 12:28; Gal 1:13; Php 3:6; Matt 16:18; Eph 1:22, 3:10,21, 5:23,24,25,27,29,32; Col 1:18,24; and Heb 12:23.

The word “church” is not used in the Scriptures to describe a physical structure (for an example see Rom 16:5 where the reference is to the people gathered together not the physical structure where they have gathered), nor is it ever used of a state (government sponsored) church. Neither is it used to describe a denomination (although denominations are not specifically prohibited,) nor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Greek word EKKLESIA is never equated with the Kingdom of God or Heaven. Peter is given the “keys” to the Kingdom, with the entrance being through Jesus and then into The Church (Matt 16:19). The Greek word for kingdom is BASILEIA, which means a “place of royal power” and is used 162 times. The offer of

⁶⁷ Henry George Liddell & Robert Scott, *Liddell & Scott Lexicon*, 1968; Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Lexicon*, 1977

⁶⁸ **Acts 19:32** So then, some [of the followers of Demetrius the silversmith] were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly [EKKELSIA] was in confusion, and the majority did not know for what cause they had come together. **Acts 19:39** "But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly [EKKELSIA] [used of a legislative body]. **Acts 19:41** And after saying this he dismissed the assembly [EKKELSIA].

the Kingdom by Jesus is focused more on a physical entity that is entered by spiritual means, but since the Jews rejected their Messiah and His Kingdom, that physical Kingdom is in the future. The Church will reign and serve with Christ in this future 1,000 year Kingdom known as the Millennium (Rev 1:6; Matt 19:28; 1 Cor 6:2-3).

The Church is never designated as Israel, but racial Jews who are genetically related to Abraham are part of The Church when they believe in Jesus as their Messiah.

Church government applies only to local bodies and not to an authority outside the local church (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 14:40).

Believers are to seek to maintain a spiritual balance concerning support of both the local church and the Universal Church, because they are both important. Each is to perform its prescribed functions and neither should be neglected. The local church, properly focused, seeks to touch the world and not just build its own numbers. The Universal Church, properly focused, should seek to build local churches. Notice that there is only one true "head" of The Church designated by the Word, and that is Jesus Himself (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 4:15; 5:23).

3. The Historical Beginning of the Universal Church

The "Universal Church" is also known as the "Invisible Church" emphasizing that all Believers are members and known to God but not necessarily visible to humanity. The union with Christ is real although not visible at this time. Another designation is the "Ideal Church" emphasizing the pattern of how a local church is to function. Still another is the "Spiritual Church" emphasizing the means of entry to the invisible assembly which is through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which will be discussed in more detail below.

The term "Catholic" is a term that refers to the Universal Church, which is spiritual in nature, with Christ alone as its "Head" (Col 1:18). All who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah are members. The Roman Catholic Church based at Rome claims to be the Universal Church but has a mortal human at its head, thus it does not fit the description.

Some have believed that The Church began with Adam. This view does not consider that revelation is progressive through the course of history. There is no reference of any kind to The Church or religious assembly during his life or prior to the Flood.

Some believe that The Church began with Abraham and see the promises to Abraham fulfilled in The Church instead of The Church partaking of the promises to Abraham alongside spiritual Israel. Those who do not recognize Dispensations (previously discussed) often hold to this view.

Some believe The Church began with the public ministry of Christ, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit was first necessary for Believers to be part of The Church (1 Cor 12:13). The Baptism of the Holy Spirit did not occur until the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Some believe that The Church began with the Apostle Paul and distinguish The Church founded in Acts with those established by Paul. This is the view of "ultra-hyper dispensationalists." These are people who like to add invalid dispensations and some of them place as many as 16 dispensations in the age of Paul. There was no change of priesthood so there was no change of law or dispensation (Heb 7:12).

The Church actually began on the Day of Pentecost which was after the Lord's resurrection (Acts 2). This position is defended by an analysis of Ephesians 3:1-10 and the correct interpretation of "The Mystery" as defined by Scripture. Scripture describes The Church as a "mystery." The Greek word translated "mystery" is *MUSTERION* (which is used 28 times). It means something that is revealed only to the initiates (those who want to know the Truth), not something that is necessarily difficult to understand. The doctrine pertaining to The Church is said to be a "mystery" that was previously hidden by God from men (Eph 5:32; Rom 16:25-27). This is in agreement with the justice of God in that Christ was making a legitimate offer of the physical Kingdom. The Jews were to make a decision whether or not to accept the offer. The offer was not to be clouded by other possibilities; therefore, no information on The Church Age was presented beforehand. If the Jews had accepted their Messiah there would have been no need for The Church. God's Omniscience knew that they would not accept the offer but the offer was still legitimate, just like the offer of salvation to

humanity is legitimate even though not everyone will accept it. In the sphere of progressive revelation, The Church was then introduced.

Please consider the explanation of Ephesians 3:1-10:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles ² if indeed you have heard of the stewardship [Greek word OIKONOMIA used 9 times and means "law of the house" or "dispensation." It is the guiding laws for a given era of time] of God's grace which was given to me for you; ³ that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery [something known only to the initiates; Paul was not the only one to receive this, but rather a selected few], as I wrote before in brief. ⁴ And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶ to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, ⁷ of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. ⁸ To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light what is the administration [Greek word OIKONOMIA = same word as verse 2 = stewardship, dispensation] of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; ¹⁰ in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

The Church could not begin until the Messiah became flesh and manifested Himself to the world. His proclamations were not proven until His resurrection on the third day after His death (1 Cor 15:1-5). Jesus, the "Prophet like unto Moses" (Acts 3:19-26), prophesied that The Church would come after Him and that Peter would be an important part of it (Matt 16:18). The sacrifice of Christ on the cross purchased The Church (Acts 20:28) and His resurrection guarantees the Believer's resurrection as First Fruits (1 Cor 15:20-23). Christ's Ascension to the right hand established Jesus as the Head of The Church and ruler over various new Spiritual Gifts (Eph 1:20b-23; 4:7-12).

More evidence that The Church did not begin until the Day of Pentecost is that entry was through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which did not happen prior to the Day of Pentecost after the resurrection. Jesus foretold this new relationship of the Holy Spirit moving inside the Believer on the night before the cross (John 14:16-17). He later told His disciples to wait for the promised Holy Spirit of which He had spoken earlier (Acts 1:4-5). This baptism of the Holy Spirit is what places us into the "body" of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). Paul makes it clear that the "Body of Christ" is The Church (Col 1:18,24). At what has been called the "Gentile Pentecost," Peter references the beginning of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to the receiving Gentiles by referring to the Day of Pentecost after the resurrection (Acts 11:15; 2:38).

B. The Universal Church Has a New Priesthood

The new priesthood in the Universal Church are all Believers, as they are Royal Priests to God. (1 Pet 2:9; Book of Hebrews; Rev 1:6)

Israel is never The Church nor is The Church, Israel. Israel serves as an example for The Church (Heb 10:1). Priestly privileges given to Israel can be applied to The Church. Based on Exodus 19:5-6, which says,

'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

From the Exodus passage several things can be deduced concerning the role of Israel to the nations:

- Israel's ministry was to all nations.
- The extent of its ministry was based on obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.
- God reserved the right to cut off Israel as the priestly agency, but because of the Abrahamic Covenant this was only temporary.
- The New Testament attests to the fact that God exercised this option because all Believers were made priests. (1 Pet 2:9)

- Because of Israel's rejection of their Messiah, The Church can be a universal and royal priesthood.
- The Church and Israel retained dual covenants and remain distinct.

There were prerequisites to selection to the priesthood in the Age of Israel. They were chosen from the tribe of Levi, set apart as holy, and approached God as intercessors for the people (Heb 5:1).

Some elements are common to both priesthoods, and some are different. The Levitical Priesthood was based on physical birth where The Church's priesthood is based on the new birth at the moment of faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, The Church's priesthood is superior. Priests were removed if they had or obtained a physical defect under the Mosaic Law, but Church Age priests are permitted physical defects. Levitical Priests functioned as "shadows" of the reality to come, whereas The Church functions in the reality that Messiah has arrived (Heb 8:5; 10:11-12). Both priesthoods have a High Priest, but The Church's High Priest is superior because He sits in that position forever, whereas the human priest of Israel had to retire at a certain age (Heb 7:14-16; Heb 9:11-12).

The reason that access to God is given to The Church is to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5). This begins with the priest offering his own body as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). The offering should result in doing good and sharing, offering praise and witnessing as an honorable priest to God by serving those in spiritual authority (2 Cor 9:10-14; Heb 13:15-17).

C. Descriptions of the Universal Church

1. The Church Is Known as the Body of Christ (Please look up Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 10:16,17; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 1:23; 2:16; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,30; Col 1:18,24; 2:19 and 3:15)

Some view The Church as an extension of the incarnation of Christ. This is the Roman Catholic view and is popular among liberal Protestants. The serious implication is that it identifies Jesus Christ with The Church by saying Jesus Christ is The Church and The Church is Jesus Christ, and therefore The Church is given His infallible authority and has the final word in matters of Truth. A person might ask if The Church is infallible then why have official theological positions changed multiple times throughout church history? Such a position rejects conventional Ecclesiology (the Doctrine of The Church) and Soteriology (Doctrines of Salvation). The end result is that a person must join the "church" to be saved, because The Church is Jesus Christ and a person must be "in Him" to be saved. This is an allegorical interpretation that tries to turn the Body of Christ that is composed of Believers into the literal Jesus, the Messiah.

The correct interpretation is that for purposes of illustration "The Church" is "The Body of Christ" in a spiritual sense not a literal one. This is true because Jesus Christ still exists and is sitting at the "right hand" of God. The student must avoid being overly literal and therefore deny the reality of an illustration. These illustrations are called "metaphors" which are figures of speech. The weakness with a metaphor is that it can never fully represent the entity to which it is compared. This metaphor still conveys the truth needed to know about the great mystery.

This metaphor also implies the supremacy of the "Head of the Body." The Father has given Jesus Christ to be "Head" over all things for The Church (Eph 1:22). Another analogy concerns the husband being the head of the wife, and so Jesus Christ is Head of The Church (Eph 5:23). As the Head, He is the means by which all of the Body is nourished, administered, led, and knit together (Col 2:18-19). Individual members of the Body are expected to mature with reference to Him (Jesus Christ) Who is the head (Eph 4:15-16). Since the Head is supreme, the body doesn't dictate to the head (Col 1:15-18; Eph 5:24), but should follow its instructions.

Unity with the head is permanent which begins with salvation and baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:16; 4:4). The Body includes every member with no member being unimportant (1 Cor 10:16-17; 12:12-27; Eph 5:30; Rom 12:5). Unity with The Messiah implies joint heirship and destiny, sharing and completing His sufferings (Col 1:24). This suffering is not for redemptive purposes but the Universal Church has an allotted portion of suffering with deliverance promised before the beginning of The Tribulation (Rev 3:10).

The sustenance of the body comes from the Head as is revealed by the Word of God. The temporal objective for each individual member is to grow up (Eph 4:15-16; Col 2:19). In the context of Ephesians 4, spiritual growth and the use of Spiritual gifts are connected. The Spiritual gifts cannot properly function apart from the guidebook of the Word of God, which emphasizes a qualitative (maturing) growth in the life of an individual.

This growth is directed from the Head, Who supplies the communication gifts to build up and strengthen the Body (Eph 4:8-12). To do this He will provide what is needed for the Body to mature (Php 4:19), and the soul to grow up (1 John 1:9). Those who are mature also seek the entire Body of Christ to be mature, which begins in the local church (Eph 4:13) and extends to the Universal Church.

2. The Church Is Described as the Bride of Christ (Please look up 2 Cor 11:2; Rev 21:9; Eph 5:23)

Some believe that The Church is exclusively the triumphant church of the future (Rev 19:6-9), but the evidence is that The Church is the Bride of Christ. Presently, The Church is only engaged to be married and awaits the completion of the marriage (2 Cor 11:2). In the ancient world, and in some parts of the world today, the engagement has the same legally binding agreements as marriage does, but without sex.

The evidence shows that the bride is the “Mystery” Church of the present, which includes all who believe in Jesus Christ from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture. The emphasis in this metaphor is the love the groom has for the bride and that the bride should have in return (Eph 5:22-33).

Jesus Christ is the groom (Matt 9:15; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35; John 3:29-30). As the God-Man, His love is perfect and infinite. His love was displayed overtly through the cross (Eph 5:2, 25-27; Acts 20:28). Such love is best portrayed by the intimate relationship that should exist between a husband and wife. A man's love is usually motivated by the loveliness (both inner and outer beauty) of the woman, but the love of Jesus Christ for The Church is unconditional and not based on a lack of flaws, but is inclusive of them. His love is amazing in light of the great initial separation between the lover and beloved (Eph 2:4-5), the lack of the beloved's ability to benefit the lover (1 John 4:10,19), the sinfulness of the beloved (Eph 2:1-3), the fact that Jesus Christ simply doesn't need a bride to be happy, and the fact of the frequent antagonism and disobedience of the beloved (Gal 5:19-21). Such a deep love from the groom is worthy of a love response from the bride (Eph 3:18-19). The beloved's love grows from the transformed life that comes from the study and application of the Word of The Groom (John 14:15-24; Eph 5:2). Such love is commanded for all members of the Royal Family (John 15:12,17; 1 Thes 4:9), however, it is impossible for the bride to have greater love than the groom (John 15:13).

Notice also the exalted position of the bride. She is not just a handmaid to work in the house but holds a special position and rank.

The common Jewish wedding ceremony consisted of three stages. First was the betrothal (engagement), then the wedding ceremony and then status as a wife. The betrothal occurred when Jesus Christ purchased The Church with His own blood at the cross. Therefore, The Church is engaged to Him (2 Cor 11:2). This parallels the first stage of the oriental (eastern) marriage ceremony where the betrothal was legally binding as to inheritance and the prohibition of adultery. Betrothal included the offering and acceptance of a dowry. Once this was done, if adultery occurred there was a need for a formal divorce. The duration of the betrothal may have been for any length of time, which is paralleled in The Church Age from the time of the cross.

To begin the wedding ceremony, the groom came from his father's house to get his bride, usually at night, wearing his best clothing and accompanied by his friends. This is representative of the Rapture when the Lord, The Groom, returns for His Bride, The Church. The groom then took the bride to his house for the wedding. This is paralleled when Christ told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place in His Father's House for them and that He would come get them and bring them to Himself (John 14:1-3). His return (The Rapture) will come suddenly, like a thief in the night (1 Thes 5:1-5), with the night representing a time of spiritual darkness. The Groom will take the Bride to His Father's house at the Rapture (1 Thes 4:16-17). There the Bride will prepare herself for the wedding ceremony which will take place just before the Second Advent (Rev 19:7-8).

Then the glorified Bride will no longer have a Sin Nature (Eph 5:27), nor will she produce human good. She will be conformed to the glorified humanity of the Groom (1 John 3:2), whose glory shines forever (Eph 5:27).

The Church makes herself ready at the Judgment Seat of Christ where the adornment from her rewards are issued (1 Cor 3:8; 4:5; 2 Cor 5:10). The wedding ceremony actually takes place in heaven (Rev 19:7-8), then the Groom with His Bride returns to earth where He conquers all His enemies (Rev 19:11-16 cf. Psa 110:1). The wedding feast is then celebrated on earth (Rev 19:9; Matt 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24; Matt 25:1-13). Invitations are given to those left behind after the Rapture to believe in Christ and join in the feast (Rev 19:9).

The Bride will live forever with Jesus Christ in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-8).

The bride metaphor in Scripture exalts Church Age saints to the highest imaginable position of all creatures. They are the Bride of Christ.

3. The Church is Described as the Building of God (Please look up 1 Cor 3:10-15; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:4-7)

The foundation is described as made up of apostles and prophets (Eph 2:19-20; 3:4-5), referring to the key evangelistic and administrative gift (apostle) and the key gift of verification (prophet). These gifts were given to the early Church to provide information and accountability during its infancy.

Jesus Christ is the “Chief Cornerstone” from which everything else in the “building” is measured. In the ancient world, as in the present, there were elaborate and special ceremonies in the laying of the cornerstone. The stone was placed to be seen by all (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6) and to commemorate the beginning of a building project. This analogy points out Christ’s significance to the spiritual structure and is so significant that He is identified with the entire foundation (1 Cor 3:11). Jesus was the stone rejected by the spiritual leaders and became head of the corner stone and also the “stumbling block” for many. The rejection of Christ left the construction of the House of Israel incomplete and suspended through The Church Age, so the Lord began a new structure – The Church.

Individual Christians are considered to be “living stones” in this building (1 Pet 2:5). The New Testament has four Greek words for stone. LITHOS (used 59 times) which refers to a stone that has been hammered to fit, PETRA (used 15 times) which refers to a large uncut rock, PETROS (used 156 times) referring to a loose stone, and AKROGONIAIOS (used 2 times, Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6) which is a cornerstone. When these words are used to illustrate people rather than rocks it is important to know which word is used.

Besides being referred to as a cornerstone, Jesus is also referred to as a PETRA and LITHOS (Matt 16:18; 1 Pet 2:4). Even as Christ is spoken of as a stone prepared and valuable so is the Believer who partakes of His character. In the resurrection, God took the rejected stone and made it the chief cornerstone of the foundation for this new spiritual building (1 Cor 3:11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20). As “stones” in this building Believers possess the life of the risen Christ (1 Pet 1:3-5). As do all buildings, this building will have just the right amount of stones to fit the plan.

The building grows in size and quality (Eph 2:20-22). Christians have been permanently placed on the foundation at salvation (Eph 2:20). The Foundation has been shown to be Christ to Whom we are permanently affixed since we are said to be “in Him” (1 Cor 3:11). The emphasis on the quality is found in Ephesians 2:21 which says Believers are being “fitted together,” and growing into a “holy” temple. This growth shows the importance of spiritual edification in a local church. A church environment is needed to grow, which is strongly asserted in Scripture (Heb 10:23-25).

Spiritual leaders should not only be concerned with caring for the needs of the church members but also teaching them how to grow up spiritually. This building is called a “temple of God.” The Greek word for “temple” is NAOS, which refers to the inner sanctum of the Holy Place. The word is not the Greek word TOPOS, which can refer to the overt building. The entrance into the NAOS was granted only to priests, and was a special place of Divine presence. When a person rejects the Word of God, or disobeys it, the temple is defiled (1 Cor 3:16), so no Believer should do things that bring shame to The Church.

4. The Church is Described as a Flock (Please look up John 10:1-16,26,29; Acts 20:28; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 5:1-4; 2:25)

Prior to The Church Age, Israel is the Lord’s flock (Jer 13:17); (See also Eze 34). Jesus the Messiah called the circle of His disciples His “**little flock**” (Luke 12:32), which teaches His role as a shepherd to those who believe. He is the Chief Shepherd to the Universal Church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-4) and as the God-man, the Perfect Shepherd (Heb 13:20-21; 1 Pet 2:25). He taught that one day He would gather His flock which would include sheep that were presently not of His fold (John 10:1-18).

The Chief Shepherd commits the task of tending the Flock to undershepherds (John 21:15-17). In this passage lambs refer to new Believers, and sheep to mature Believers. The undershepherd is to feed both new and advanced Believers. Both Peter and Paul exhort the pastor to “**shepherd the flock among you**”

(1 Pet 5:2; 2 Tim 2:2) which indicates undershepherds should undergo a time of training and testing (1 Tim 3:1-7) before accepting the responsibility.

God the Holy Spirit appoints men to this task (it is not the Greek word ANTHROPOS which could refer to humanity, but ANDROS which refers to a male, particularly a nobleman or one who holds a position of honor). Women should not serve as pastors except on an interim basis, for they are not to exercise authority over the men (1 Tim 2:12). When women have to serve the Body of Christ in leadership roles, it is a sign that the men in that area are spiritually weak.

Each pastor's congregation is called an allotment (1 Pet 5:2-3; the Greek word for "allotment" is KLEROS), meaning that they are assigned in grace by the Chief Shepherd. A pastor's motives are constantly open to correction by the Word of God. They are not to serve under compulsion, for dishonest financial gain, and are not to be a tyrant. As an "undershepherd" the pastor is to set the example in life, being "above reproach" (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). All spiritual leaders will give an account of their use of authority (Heb 13:17), and their reward is a "crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4).

The Pastor's job includes the role of "teacher" (Eph 4:11). Their textbook is the Word of God in order to present the **"whole purpose of God"** or in other words the entire Bible (Acts 20:27-30).

Each "allotment" of "sheep" should recognize and respect the authority of their shepherd (Heb 13:17). This is also implied by the use of the word "overseer" (the word is translated in the KJV as "bishop") which is used to describe spiritual leaders (Acts 20:28). A pastor's attitude should be that of a "bondservant," and who has authority in a limited location, namely the spiritual function of a local church.

5. The Church is Described as the Branches (John 15:1-8)

In this parable, Jesus identifies Himself as "The Vine" who is the source of salvation and spiritual nourishment. The Father is the caretaker who tends "The Vine" and Believers are the "branches" which are extensions of "The Vine" whose role is to bear fruit (Eph 2:10). Those who do not bear fruit will be removed for lack of production by death (but not the Second Death or loss of salvation). Believers can go so far astray that they can die the "sin unto death" which is punitive action taken by God for irresponsible actions (1 John 5:16-17). Notice that this parable focuses on "disciples" who have the mission to produce fruit (John 15:8).

The objective of a producing branch is more production, which requires "pruning." "Pruning" is testing for Believers while under adversity. Because the "branches" are connected to the "Vine" who is Jesus, it is referring to Believers only. Because it involves works, it is not another method of salvation, for salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ. The two essential requirements for maximum production of fruit in the Christian life are submission to the Holy Spirit and Christ being formed in us (Gal 5:22-23; Gal 4:19). When a person does not seek to keep the command to be **"filled by the Holy Spirit"** (Eph 5:18) with the objective of **"being filled up to all the fulness of God"** (Eph 3:14-19), spiritual growth stops and Christ is not being formed in the individual. (Gal 4:19). This results in the rejection of the works of the person. The "fire" does not refer to the fires of hell but instead to the fire that consumes all the human good works of man (1 Cor 3:11-15).

When a person yields to the Holy Spirit, studies the Word of God, prays, and conducts activities that glorify God, the resultant fruit will be rewarded for eternity (John 15:7-8; 1 Cor 3:11-15; Heb 6:9-10).

6. The Relationship of the Metaphors to Each Other

- The "Body" emphasizes the unity of The Church (composed of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ), focusing on a desire for The Church to function as one.
- The "Bride" emphasizes the relationship to Christ that should grow as a Believer becomes more mature.
- The "Building" emphasizes growth in a qualitative sense as it becomes spiritually mature and in a quantitative sense as it increases numerically.
- The "Flock" considers the authority of the Chief Shepherd and how all are to follow His lead.
- The "Branches" refer to the objective of The Church which is to bear fruit that is pleasing in the eyes of the Lord.

D. The Local Church

There are many ideas concerning what a local church should be with almost as many viewpoints as there are churches. Some believe a local church should be only a center of evangelism with every service, ministry, and activity directed toward soul winning. Some view a church's success based on its programs, which are designed to build quantitatively. Others encourage small discussion groups that ask people what they think the verse under consideration might mean, instead of leading them to apply the Word through teaching what it does mean. There is also a trend toward counseling with pastors serving more as psychologists than teachers.

The Word of God is clear that the primary function of a local church should be the teaching of Scripture. The primary command of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) is to "make disciples." Disciples are students who follow the leader and in this case Jesus Christ.

Please notice some of the Biblical examples and exhortations that show the importance of teaching in a local church:

- Since the Day of Pentecost, the people were first "devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching..." (Acts 2:42).
- The office of deacon was established to care for widows and orphans so the pastor could spend time in prayer and study (Acts 6:1-7).
- The first large Gentile church needed a teacher after its initial encouragement by Barnabas, so Paul was asked to join him to help teach (Acts 11:19-26).
- Paul returned to previously visited cities during his first missionary journey to appoint elders and pastors to teach (Acts 14:21-23; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:17-18).
- In Antioch, Corinth, and Ephesus, Paul taught the Word (Acts 15:35).
- Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders admonishes them to shepherd their flock by teaching the entire purpose of God (Acts 20:17-35).
- Paul's consistent method of ministry was teaching (1 Cor 4:17).
- A central purpose of singing in the local church is to teach (Col 3:16).
- Paul prays that he may return to the church at Thessalonica so he could teach them and fill up their deficiency in the knowledge of the Bible (1 Thes 3:10).
- Paul wrote to Timothy to pay attention to his teaching so that he might warn the flock about false teachers and encourage them to stay with the Truth (1 Tim 4:1-6).
- There is an indictment to Believers for not being able to appreciate spiritual meat from the Word (Heb 5:11-14).
- Prophecy needs to be taught (Please look up 2 Pet 2-3).
- Those who read, hear, and heed (study) the book of Revelation will be blessed (Rev 1:3).
- The letters to the churches at Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae record Paul's prayer for Believers which all emphasize the importance of studying the Truth to obtain quality spiritual growth (Eph 1:16-23; Php 1:9-10, Col 3:16).
- Believers are to be both hearers and doers of the Word, which means they need to be taught (Jas 1:22).
- Timothy's purpose for being at Ephesus was to counter false doctrine and to teach true doctrine (1 Tim 1:3-4; 4:11-16).
- Teachers are to teach the faithful who also have the Gift of Teaching so they can pass on the Truth to the next generation (2 Tim 2:2).
- Pastors are specifically exhorted to rightly divide (accurately interpret) the Word of Truth (2 Tim 2:15).
- The last recorded challenge to Timothy was to teach the Word (2 Tim 4:1-4).
- The antidote for false teachers is teaching Truth (Eph 4:25).

E. The Importance of Maturity (Eph 4:11-16)

The primary function of the Pastor is to "equip the saints to do the work of the ministry to build the Body of Christ." God's Word teaches how the gifts should function. While an important part of the function of the local church is to grow in numbers, its primary desire should be for the saints to grow spiritually so that they can minister to others and build The Universal Church through love. Real church growth is from God and His

twofold desire is for people to get saved and come to a full knowledge of the Truth, namely become mature (1 Tim 2:3-4).

True spiritual growth comes from God (1 Cor 3:6-7).

F. New Testament Terminology of Church Leaders

1. Elder

The root meaning of the word “elder” (Greek word PRESBUTEROS) involves age. Its spiritual meaning is concerned with spiritual age or maturity. Elders are to be respected, not just because they are advanced in years. Elders are to be careful to be worthy of respect (1 Tim 5:17). The Greek word is used 66 times in the New Testament with most of those usages referring to the elders of the Jewish leadership. The noun SUMPRESBUTEROS is used once in 1 Peter 5:1 and means “fellow-elder.”

2. Bishop

The root meaning of the word translated “bishop” in the King James Translation is an “overseer.” It is closely related to the Greek verb EPISKEPTOMAI (used 11 times) which means to “visit for the purpose of inspection” so it focuses on oversight. The Greek noun is EPISKOPOS which is used 5 times (Acts 20:28; Php 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25) and should be translated “overseer.” The noun EPISKOPE (often mistranslated as “visitation” or “office of bishop”) is used 4 times (Luke 19:44; Acts 1:20; 1 Tim 3:1; 1 Pet 2:12) emphasizing the presence of an overseer. The verb is EPISKOPEO is used 2 times (Heb 12:15; 1 Pet 5:2). Jesus is called “The Overseer” which means that all “overseers” are under His authority (1 Pet 2:25).

3. Pastor

A pastor is a “shepherd” whose job is to care for the sheep. The Greek noun is POIMEN, which is used 18 times. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Great Shepherd (Heb 13:20), and the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4 Greek word ARCHIPOIMENOS). The Greek verb is POIMAINO, which is used 11 times and means, “to feed as a shepherd.”

4. Relationship of Elder, Overseer, and Pastor

While these terms are often used today in churches for various established offices that contain these words as titles, they are closely interrelated. All church leadership in spiritual areas is to be mature (Elder), exercise oversight (Overseer), and function as a shepherd of the sheep (Pastor). A clear example of this is found in Acts 20:17 where Paul calls the Ephesian Elders together and tells them that the Holy Spirit has made them Overseers whose function is to Shepherd The Church of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-2). Simply stated, spiritual leaders are to lead by example (elder), watch the flock closely (oversee), and care for them through seeing they have the right food to eat (shepherd).

5. Deacons

The root meaning of the word group translated “deacon” is a “minister” or “servant,” like one who serves a king (Matt 20:26). The focus of this word group is on the actions performed instead of the attitude of the one serving, not that attitude is unimportant. The Greek words are the masculine noun DIAKONOS, which is used 29 times in the New Testament meaning a minister or servant. The feminine noun DIAKONIA is used 34 times referring to the service itself. The verb DIAKONEW is used 37 times means “to serve.” There was an office of Deacon established in Acts 6:1-6 and qualifications were given for the office in 1 Tim 3:8-13. All Believers are called to “service” or “ministry,” but some hold the office. Paul uses the word “deacon (DIAKONOS)” to describe himself (Col 1:23), and the word is also used of Christ Himself, **“even as the Son of man did not come to be ministered to (DIAKONEW), but to minister (DIAKONEW), and give His life a ransom for the many”** (Matt 20:28).

6. Bondslaves

The Greek words come from the verb DOULO, which is used 8 times and indicates to be made a slave. Also in the word group is the masculine noun DOULOS, used 126 times meaning a bondservant, DOULEUO, used 25 times meaning “to serve as a bondservant,” and, the feminine noun DOULEIA, used 5 times (See Rom 8:15,21; Gal 4:24; 5:1; Heb 2:15) and translated “bondage.” Most Bible translations simply translate this word group as “servant” and it gets confused with the DIAKONOS word group. This word is significantly different because it emphasizes a willing mental attitude of service instead of simply the act itself.

7. Messengers

Church leaders are called messengers (Greek word AGGELOS) in the letters to the churches in the Book of Revelation. It focuses on the message from God that is to be taught to others (See Rev 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,5,7,14).

8. Teachers

This term is described by the Greek word DIDASKALOS, which is used 59 times and means a “teacher.” It is also often translated “Master.” The Greek noun DIDASKALIA is used 21 times and stresses the act of teaching. The Greek word DIDACHE is used 30 times and is often translated “doctrine.” This word stresses the authority of the teacher. Jesus is “The Teacher” who has the authority to set the standards of doctrine (John 13:13-14).

9. Titles and Offices

It is important to notice that some of these terms are used to denote offices in the local church. It is more important to note that the Lord wanted church leaders to seek the testimony that proceeds from a correct function instead of the title that is given to a position or office (Matt 23:6-12). A Believer will not receive the commendation, “*well done, good and faithful servant*” (Matt 25:21) from the Lord unless they have been faithful with what the Lord has given to them (Luke 16:10-12).

10. Qualifications for Church Leaders

There are two key passages that apply directly to church leadership. They are 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9. These passages list various qualities that should be understood as characteristics of spiritual maturity, since they are required of church leaders. They involve:

- Being “above reproach” which means not subject to valid charges of sin.
- Being intimately loyal to only your spouse.
- Thinking that is not intoxicated by the attitudes of the world (temperate).
- Being able to relate to others in a sane way (prudent).
- Orderliness concerning the physical details of life.
- Being a friend to strangers.
- Patiently instructing others.
- A lifestyle not governed by intoxicants.
- A lifestyle not given to open physical conflict.
- A balanced lifestyle.
- A lifestyle free from a love of verbal conflicts.
- A lifestyle free from the love of money.
- Setting a good example in all areas of life within a Believer's own house.
- Lengthy experience in spiritual matters.
- Seeing the need to have a good witness to those who are not in The Church.
- Avoidance of selfish pleasure seeking.
- Not prone to unjust anger.
- Loves what is good.
- Willingly does what is right.
- Is holy in thoughts, speech, and actions.

Leaders who violate these principles should be confronted according to the protocol established by our Lord (Matt 18:15-20) and the Apostle Paul (1 Tim 5:19-20).

Church leaders need to protect the flock through teaching. Each person who has the Gift of Pastor or Teacher needs to occasionally “stir up” the gift (2 Tim 1:6) so personal zeal does not grow weary and ministry slow down or stop.

The leader's authority is described in Hebrews 13:7,17, but they are not to use that authority to ***"lord it over the flock of God"*** (1 Pet 5:3). The hearers are to follow the Berean example and not automatically accept everything a teacher says without comparing it with Scripture (Acts 17:10-11).

One possible blessing in time of the Pastor (Elder) who teaches is financial (1 Tim 5:17-18), but the real blessing is to be faithful and receive the crown of glory from the Lord (1 Pet 5:1-4). The local church should view financial support of the pastor as their responsibility (1 Tim 5:17-18).

The leader should seek to be an example to the flock, first by being faithful to the Word of God. This includes gracious conduct, especially toward older men and women, while appealing to younger men and women as a brother or sister (2 Tim 3:10-11; 2:24-26).

Finally, teachers are not to waste time communicating theories, which undermine the faith (1 Tim 6:3-5).

G. Factors Necessary for a Learning Situation

The teacher is to accurately handle the Word of Truth (2 Tim 2:15), having been taught by other faithful men (2 Tim 2:2). Those who want to learn the Word of God need to depend on the Holy Spirit. This involves an attitude of humility while studying the Word of God and includes confessing one's sins as needed, seeking to not grieve the Spirit of God (1 John 1:9; Eph 4:30).

A good learning situation must also consider the spiritual hunger of each individual (1 Thes 2:13). Sadly, some simply do not want to learn. A teacher should keep teaching the Truth praying that one day the student(s) will spiritually wake up (2 Tim 4:2-4).

As basic information is taught and understood by the hearers, more detailed information can be accurately communicated and added to their understanding (Heb 5:10-12). This is accomplished in part through repetition (Php 3:1; 2 Pet 1:12-13). The teacher's main focus of the teaching should be based on content and not the style of presentation (2 Tim 3:16-17).

H. Warnings to False Teachers

There are three main categories of false teaching. The first involves adding to, or subtracting from, the Word of God and making the addition or subtraction into a false standard of spirituality. This is called "Legalism." The Pharisees were known for this practice, which the Lord boldly confronted (Please look up Matt 23:13-36). The Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Galatians to expose the practice and described it more fully in Colossians (Col 2:20-23).

The second is the practice of lawlessness that distorts grace and freedom through violation of the true laws of God. An example is the current trend to accept immorality as a valid lifestyle. Lawlessness occurs in a person who does not want to be purified by battling the sin nature (1 John 3:3-4). This is also known as "Antinomianism" or "contrary to law."

The third category is called "Gnosticism" which comes from the Greek word GNOSIS and claims to be a higher knowledge. This group of people infiltrated the early church and proclaimed there was no need to battle sin since Christ paid for all sins on the cross (1 John 1:8-10). Today this Gnostic viewpoint is often found in worldly counseling that seeks to get a person to accept their sinful faults as valid (like fornication and drug abuse) by believing the sins are acceptable actions before God.

Paul warned of the rise of false teachers he called "wolves" that would come after him (Acts 20:29-31). These "wolves" are teachers who twist the Word of God for financial gain. In addition, he warned of the rise of the teachings of superstitious legalism (1 Tim 4:1-3), and told of the apostasy in the last days of The Church (2 Thes 2:3; 2 Tim 3:1-9). Peter, like Paul and others, also warned of the false teachers of the last days (2 Pet 2:1-3).

I. The Characteristics of a Model Church

A model church, as described by Scripture, is designed to be a local, self-governing body of Believers who are led by a faithful Pastor seeking to communicate Truth. The hearers in a model church respond to that Truth seeking to grow spiritually in order to return the love that God has displayed to them.

The book of 1 Thessalonians has many principles that describe a model church (1:7). Please notice that nothing is said about a building, or the size of the congregation, or its wealth. In fact, this church was located in a very poor area of the world. Please look up these passages in 1 Thessalonians and follow the principles.

These principles may be summarized as follows:

- A local autonomous body (1:1)
- Believers in a limited, geographical area (1:1,5)
- Growing spiritually (4:1,11)
- Living God's Word (1:3,6; 2:17; 3:3,7; 4:3,10)
- Laboring under adversity (1:3,6; 2:14; 3:3)
- Growing in their love for God (1:9)
- Spiritually awake prophetically and historically (1:10; 2:19; 5:1,4)
- Have faithful leaders (1:5,6; 2:4)
- Understand the Plan of God (1:4; 2:19; 4:13,14; 5:8)
- Separated from evil (1:9; 5:22)
- They have chosen to be bondservants to God (1:9)
- Withstanding pressure from friends and enemies (2:1)
- Readily responded to Truth (2:13; 5:13)
- Have a love towards all humanity (3:12; 4:6, 9, 12; 5:13,14,15)
- Seek eternal rewards (3:13)
- Desire that each other gain maximum eternal rewards (4:1,18; 5:11)
- Desire to conquer sin (4:3,8)
- Spiritually awake (5:6,7)
- Excel in prayer, thanks, and joy (5:23)
- Grounded in the basics of theology (5:24)
- Imitate the good things other Christians do in imitation of the Lord (1:6; 2:14)

A model church has great impact in evangelism (1:6-8), resulting in great joy (1:6-8) while getting the attention of the forces of evil in the Angelic Conflict (2:18).

J. Replace Authoritarian Leadership with Servant Leadership

Leadership is the art of influencing and directing individuals in such a way as to obtain their willing cooperation, confidence, and respect in order to accomplish the objective. The leader is often a problem solver. Supervision is the art of checking the progress of actions in a manner that encourages other workers. The responsibilities of any leader include the accomplishment of the objective while considering the welfare of the individuals who are assisting in the task at hand.

1. Christian leadership

Although our talents, personalities and gifts may vary, Scripture clearly teaches there is a leadership "style" which is uniquely Christian. This style has been modeled and commanded by Jesus Christ. This "style" is Servant Leadership and is the key to Christian greatness (Matt 20:25-28; 23:10-12).

Servant Leadership is vastly different from an "authoritarian" or "benevolent dictator" style of leadership. It is so effective that many secular businesses try to copy the principles. However, most secular businesses are motivated by selfishness, which is not a valid Christian motive.

Servant Leadership is for everyone and applies to any relationship a person may influence, either directly through personal interaction or indirectly as people observe your actions. The Lord directs Believers to be servants as they use the gifts, abilities, talents, and resources that He has given (Luke 12:48).

The world often views good leaders to be those who are domineering, have charisma, are good speakers, have experience, are determined and tough, or are politicians and compromisers. They usually have an attention-getting personality along with unusual or superior talents or abilities and are activists to accomplish their own agenda one way or another.

Servant Leadership is very practical in that all who are under the leader's influence need to receive care. The Church today needs more Servant Leaders.

2. Some Qualities of Servant Leadership

Servant Leadership begins with attitudes and motives. All Christians are expected to develop an attitude like our Lord Jesus Christ which was unselfish, humble, and sacrificial (Php 2:5-8).

Christ's attitude is motivated by love, which is the underlying requirement for spiritual service (Mark 12:29-31; Gal 5:13-14). It is a love that manifests itself in practical, observable ways as a "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-23; 1 Cor 13:4-8; Rom 12:9-21; Eph 5:25). Spiritual Love clearly seeks the removal of personal selfishness (Mark 8:34-38; Php 2:3-4). The proof of our love for Christ is our obedience to Him (John 14:15, 21, 23-24), and every leader is called to first seek to please God instead of men (Gal 1:10).

Every Spiritual Gift is designed to serve others (1 Pet 4:10). Good leadership serves by equipping others for "the work of service" (Eph 4:11-12), to build up the Body of Christ. The primary purpose of leaders in the church (whether elected or not) is to train others to minister, not to solely be a minister to the congregation.

God designed His church to be a living organism, not simply an organization, so the Servant Leader seeks unity. The unity Believers are to seek involves a oneness of purpose with common desires, focused primarily in loving God and One Another, often using a variety of methods to accomplish the task (1 Pet 2:4-5). The Servant Leader has to be motivated by love from a pure heart (1 Tim 1:5).

A Servant Leader becomes a model for others to follow (1 Cor 11:1; John 13:12-16; Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:1-4) who are interested in building God's Kingdom, not their own (2 Cor 4:5).

Selfish leadership becomes destructive because each time people are "used" for selfish ends something is taken from them instead of building them in the faith. Life clearly demonstrates that building is always more time consuming than destroying (Gal 5:15).

3. Where to Begin

Servant Leadership is much more than a leadership style that is learned through education and training like other management styles and skills. Since Servant Leadership begins with attitudes and motives, we must realize that our natural motives are selfish and seek to correct them (Mark 7:21-23). There must be a conscious effort to remove arrogance and selfishness (Php 2:5-8).

The beginning of Spiritual Leadership requires that attempts to lead solely by human talents and abilities must be corrected through a commitment to lead like Christ. It is impossible to be a genuine Servant Leader if not first a bondservant of Jesus Christ who is filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. A bondservant (Greek word DOULOS) refers to a person who has chosen to serve another because of the greatness of the master. The bondservant has not been sold into slavery so is free to leave at any time. There have been many great leaders who had to go through a "desert experience," to be humbled in order to properly lead (Moses, David, Jonah, Paul).

The real issue is whether someone leads for personal gain or seeks to follow Christ's example (1 Pet 5:2-3). God is not only interested in what is done but also why it is done, so an important personal question to ask ourselves is, "Are we His servants seeking personal gain or are we serving out of thanksgiving for what He has already done for us?"

Believers must open themselves to the Lord and allow Him to reshape attitudes, so that His love becomes the very essence of our attitude and motives (1 John 4:18-21). This starts when a Believer becomes a living sacrifice, submitting to Him and, seeking to remove all arrogance (Rom 12:1-3).

4. Leaders and Followers

In order to be a true disciple of Jesus, Believers are told to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. These principles demand a great deal of commitment and obedience (Mark 8:34). To obey the Lord requires active participation in His Body, The Church, becoming bondservants of Christ and One Another. Christ calls Believers to be both leaders and followers. Even the Lord followed the leading of the Holy Spirit and the Father.

A true Servant Leader must be a good servant follower (1 Cor 16:15-18). Servant Leaders realize the great responsibility entrusted to them, and Believers are called to obey those leaders who point them toward a life of obedience to Christ (Heb 13:17). Let us remember that leaders are to be imitated only to the degree they imitate Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:1; Heb 13:7). The application is that Believers should stop being influenced by those who are not Servant Leaders of Jesus Christ and are pursuing their own agendas.

Our ultimate master is Jesus Christ and no one can serve two masters (Matt 6:24).

5. The Perfect Model, Jesus

The Servant Leader must be ready to give to others whatever God has given to him or her. The Servant Leader owns nothing; all he or she has comes from the Lord and is readily available to be given to anyone who needs it. Jesus Himself set the example when He washed His disciples' feet (John 13:12-15).

Jesus not only spoke the Truth but He lived it (John 5:36). Believers are promised blessing when they follow His example (John 13:16-17). Jesus is not talking about adopting the "role" of a servant or an organizational structure, but actually becoming a bondservant in heart and soul.

As a Servant Leader, realize that you may be treated like a servant and never thanked, so don't approach service with the goal of being thanked for your efforts (Luke 17:6-10).

6. Paul's Model of Servant Leadership

Paul's model was directed toward what lay ahead, not what was behind (Php 3:12-14). He was willing to bear the responsibility of being a model for others to follow (1 Cor 11:1), and wanted people to realize no human model is perfect (Php 3:13). Believers can learn from the weaknesses and failures of others as well as from their own.

Paul fought personality worship which is when people become more focused on their human leaders than Christ (1 Cor 1:12-13). He sought to build and spread God's Kingdom, not establish one of his own. The practical application is to not seek to control and dominate the lives of others, but to encourage others to do what is right (Rom 12:1-3).

7. A Working Model

God wants spiritual leaders to be examples to others. In order for an undershepherd to be an example to the "flock," the Chief Shepherd must be the true leader. This is only achieved by the power of the Holy Spirit. Leaders must allow the Holy Spirit to produce His fruit through Believers with whatever gifts, talents, or abilities He chooses to give to them. Servant Leaders must serve the Lord and His flock willingly and eagerly and be examples who reflect the character of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 5:1-3).

Peter provided basic information for a pastor to lead the congregation allotted to them. He did not write from a position of superiority or political power, but as a **"fellow-elder."**

Those who are familiar with Peter's life as reported in the Gospels easily realize that Servant Leadership was not natural to Peter.

Peter calls his **"fellow-elders"** to **"shepherd God's flock."** This is a reminder that the "sheep" belong to God and that undershepherds must be careful how they lead and feed His flock. The entire concept of serving as a leader in Christ's Kingdom relates more to people than tasks.

He also calls them to **"serve willingly."** While it is true that undershepherds "ought" to serve the Chief Shepherd, if the only reason to serve Him is out of duty, the undershepherd will usually end up involved in legalism and find himself judging others instead of leading them. Seldom does joy accompany that which is done as moral duty, but joy does follow loving service. Leadership should not be purely out of a sense of obligation.

The next exhortation is to **"serve eagerly."** This phrase excludes the selfish motive of personal gain. It is an implied warning that there is a clear temptation to use one's position for personal power or advancement.

The Servant Leader must be a servant first and a leader second. A person must not first aspire to be a leader and then a servant. A simple test of leadership is whether those served have the opportunity to grow as persons. Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to become servants themselves?

The Servant Leader must lose the temptation to seek a position of absolute leader. A person who is the center of all activity, far above the congregation, will not find his true life as a servant, who releases and encourages people so they may minister to others. The minister's task is to free people from dependence upon anyone or anything except God and help them discover their ministry.

Those who lead with eagerness usually stimulate eagerness in others.

Peter's final exhortation is to ***"serve as an example."*** Most leaders tend to lead by asserting their authority, but should be warned by the phrase ***"not lording it over them."*** Authority in the spiritual community is not derived by holding a certain rank, a special tradition, old age, or long membership, but from the performance of ministry by the Holy Spirit through the Believer. The obedience of all is due to the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Never is a one-sided obedience due to other men in the flock of God. Undershepherds must remember that they, like those they serve, are still "sheep" who need a personal leader. To be the example requires following the Chief Shepherd.

8. Leading Like a Shepherd

Our greatest task is to help every person follow Jesus as the Chief Shepherd. Our greatest desire should be for them to ***"fix their eyes upon Jesus and to run the race set before them with great perseverance, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith"*** (Heb 12:1-2). It is a joyous task to encourage and enable others to fulfill that exhortation.

A "good shepherd" knows the "sheep" (John 10:14). Actual (human) shepherds have a very personal relationship with their sheep. They are closely involved with each of the sheep from their birth to their death. The shepherd cares for every need of his sheep and protects them. The application for Servant Leaders is to know the sheep God allots to them in a given period of time, find out where they are in life, and lead accordingly. All interpersonal relationships require the spirit of a servant whether direct leadership is involved or not. As a result to some degree every Believer who is in a position of authority or influence is a "pastor."

The sheep know the shepherd's voice (John 10:3-5). This refers to the importance of an open relationship with the shepherd's life that is designed to build trust. It is a relationship of mutual involvement.

The ***"Good Shepherd lays down his life"*** (John 10:11). It is not possible for mere man to lay down his life as atonement for the sins of others, but the undershepherd may be called upon to lay down their life in other ways. This means the shepherd is available to the sheep even when it is inconvenient or not desirable (2 Tim 4:1-4). There are many risks and a lot of inconveniences for Servant Leaders who care about ***"those allotted to their charge,"*** but the rewards are great.

A good shepherd leads the flock. People will not automatically follow the lead of another person just because a person realizes they are a leader. Trust cannot be legislated but is built with time, patience, and specific acts of honorable service. Effective leadership requires being in front of the sheep, not merely "telling" but "showing" them. It also implies that the shepherd must not be so far ahead of them spiritually that he is out of the flock's sight. He should communicate in a way they can understand.

The main point of this section is that there shall be one flock (John 10:16). Human shepherds tend to divide their flock and to separate their flocks from other flocks. The Lord invites people to enter His flock. Human leaders tend to drive them away by establishing selfish criteria. In Christ's Kingdom, there is ONLY ONE CHIEF SHEPHERD, and it is Him! There is also ONLY ONE FLOCK in His Kingdom, and it is His.

One of the temptations leaders face is to seek to build a personal kingdom. The temptation is often very subtle in its presentation and frequently begins out of a genuine love for the flock and a reciprocal love being returned. If care is not exercised, then eyes get off the Lord and onto the leaders. Personal kingdoms are marked with attitudes that separate Believers like, "us and them," "in our group and out of our group," or the "you are pure if you are with us and impure if you are against us." Good shepherds are more interested in separation from sin instead of separation from other Believers. Ministry (service) to "One Another" cannot happen if there is no contact.

9. Warnings to Bad Leaders

Servant Leaders are ultimately accountable to God, and He will hold each accountable for how His people are led and nourished (Heb 13:17). It does matter to God when His Church is neglected or abused by leaders who become selfish or corrupted by money or power. God does not want Christian leaders ruling like the Gentiles, namely **“lording it over those allotted to one’s charge,”** and trying to lead as a dictator.

The Book of Ezekiel has a special section dedicated to those shepherds who only take care of themselves (Eze 34:1-10). While written to Israel, the principles are valid to The Church. Please notice the list:

- They did not strengthen the weak.
- They did not heal the sick.
- They did not bind up the injured.
- They did not go after the strays.
- They did not search for the lost.
- They ruled with harshness and brutality.
- They scattered the flock.
- They are accountable to Him.
- God is against such shepherds.
- He will remove their “flock.”

10. Some Important Do’s and Don’ts

In the natural world, leaders seek to exalt themselves (1 Pet 5:2-3). The key word that describes worldly leaders is “pride.” Worldly leaders are those who “push,” “press,” and “use politics” in varying degrees to gain personal power and recognition for themselves. In the Kingdom of our Lord, those methods lead to certain spiritual failure, although to the world they often appear to work.

The invitation to follow Jesus Christ is extended to everyone since God is no respecter of persons. A person who is truly free is free to serve, not sin (1 Cor 9:19). Servant Leadership is therefore a choice.

Love has to be the basic motivation of Servant Leaders. They must not see merely tasks to be accomplished but people in various stages of growth and circumstances. Servant Leaders should have “long-range” goals coupled with a “short-range” strategy, but be willing to adjust both if they become harmful to God’s flock.

The primary part of the long-range goals must be to enable people to become spiritually mature, not only seeking to win people to Christ but for service to Christ (Col 1:28). Servant Leaders must serve the person and purposes of God (2 Cor 4:5).

The temptation becomes more subtle when the common tests faced as Spiritual Leaders become more difficult in life than usual. If the leader begins to feel that others are not following as they should, nor offering the appropriate appreciation, he is open to massive failure. If a Servant Leader begins to feel this way, he must begin again to **“kindle afresh”** his gift and intensify his pursuit of a deeper knowledge and love for the Lord (2 Tim 1:6).

There is a real human tendency to pretend to know, when the leader doesn’t have an answer. This means that there is temptation to act like something is known when it really isn’t. This is nothing more than pride, which is always a major spiritual battle. Pride tempts a person to go it alone. God says to go with Him. Pride says to follow our instincts or feelings. God says study His word and follow Him. Pride says rely on human knowledge and rationale. God says rely on Him. Pride says to pretend to know when you don’t. God says let the Truth set us free. Pride says never appear weak or uncertain. Gods tells us that His strength comes through our weakness. Pride invites people to follow us. God invites people to follow Jesus.

Servant Leaders are exhorted to be kind and gentle (2 Tim 2:24-26). The usual human response to difficult situations is to either “fight” or “flee.” Christian leaders are to do neither but instead they are to endure.

11. Putting It All Together

Servant Leadership is not natural. It requires the supernatural, the very presence and power of God.

To Summarize the Major Principles of Servant Leadership:

- All Christians need to understand the principles of Servant Leadership.
- Servant Leadership begins with the proper mental attitude.
- Love is essential for Servant Leadership.
- Biblical models teach us about Servant Leadership.
- The role of the Chief Shepherd helps us to understand what it means to be a Servant Leader.
- Servant Leaders must be servant followers of the highest authority, Christ Jesus.
- Servant Leaders are accountable to God.
- Servant Leaders choose to lead as a servant.

A Servant Leader does not use these principles to evaluate the spiritual maturity of others but instead for personal evaluation.

12. General Principles of Leadership

Remember that leadership is the art of influencing and directing individuals in such a way as to obtain their willing cooperation, confidence, and respect in order to accomplish the objective. Supervision is the art of checking on the progress of actions without undue harassment. The responsibilities of the leader include the accomplishment of the objective while considering the welfare of the individuals who are assisting. Servant Leaders can learn and use these general principles to increase their ability to lead correctly and effectively.

The leader is directly involved in problem solving. The right attitude is "How do we solve this?" not "Who can we blame?" The leader learns to recognize a problem and investigate the details, then make an estimate of the situation and look at alternative solutions and ramifications. After analysis, the leader must take the step of faith with appropriate action.

The leader must:

- Be willing to listen.
- Be willing to make decisions.
- Be willing to lovingly confront.
- Be willing to make changes.
- Be willing to assume responsibility.

There exists some very practical leadership traits that should be seen in every leader:

- Accountability to those in higher authority and those whom he leads.
- Bearing in appearance and personal conduct.
- Courage, which is a mental quality which recognizes fear of danger or criticism but enables the individual to meet danger or opposition with calmness and firmness.
- Decisiveness which includes the clear expression of the decisions made.
- Dependability in the performance of duty.
- Endurance in handling the common things of life without giving up.
- Initiative in seeing what has to be done and then commencing a course of action.
- Integrity in character and moral principle.
- Judgment which involves weighing all facts and possible solutions.
- Justice in being impartial, consistent, and fair.
- Knowledge relating to the task at hand and of those that a person seeks to lead.
- Loyalty, first of all, to the Lord and then to others.
- Not seeking personal comfort.

- Thoughtfulness in communicating to others the objective without creating undue offense.
- Unselfishness with personal time and energy.

13. The Importance of Vision for Leaders

The leader must be a visionary who prays diligently for guidance and can envision what can happen. The leader is the promoter of the vision. Once the visionary plan develops, the leader must clearly communicate the plan and encourage people to serve.

Vision requires enlightenment to see what God wants done. It then becomes a matter of trusting God. Believers should begin with God's revealed will, be available for use by Him, and maintain an enduring confidence in His Word.

What is involved in the accomplishment of a vision?

- A realistic appraisal of the present situation
- The potential achievements
- The resources needed to accomplish the vision
- Consideration of the spiritual factors
- Courage to take the steps of faith
- Patience to persevere

Without vision expressed with a plan, the leader has actually planned to fail (Prov 16:3). Those who follow leaders with a vision are warned to hold on to Jesus Christ first (Col 2:18-19).

14. Some Leadership Questions for Self-Evaluation

As a leader seeks to get better at leading others, there are some good questions to ask so the leader may personally evaluate personal growth.

- Whom do you serve?
- Do you think independently but are still teachable?
- Can you use disappointment creatively?
- Do you retain control of yourself when things go wrong?
- Do you benefit from criticism?
- Do you readily secure the cooperation and respect of others?
- Can you lead without forcing the issue of authority?
- Are you known as a peacemaker?
- Can you be trusted to handle difficult or delicate situations?
- Can you accept opposition to your viewpoint without considering it a personal affront?
- Can you make and keep friends?
- Are you unduly dependent on the praise and approval of others?
- Are you at ease in everyone's presence?
- Are you really interested in people?
- Do you possess consideration for others?
- Do you anticipate and consider the likely effect of a statement before you make it?
- Do you possess a strong and steady will?
- Do you nurture resentments?
- Are you a visionary?
- Do you welcome responsibility?
- Are you in the grip of the Master's love and His passion to serve?

For Personal Study:

- ✓ **When did the Universal Church begin and who is part of it?**
- ✓ **What are some Biblical descriptions of the Universal Church?**
- ✓ **What is a local church?**
- ✓ **Describe the importance of maturity in The Church.**
- ✓ **List some warnings to false teachers.**
- ✓ **What are some characteristics of a model church?**
- ✓ **What is the difference between authoritarian leadership and Servant Leadership?**

Some Final Comments

What kind of student are you? From the Mishnah (an ancient Jewish writing, not inspired of God) comes a Jewish parable about four types of disciples that sit in the presence of teachers:⁶⁹

- The Sponge, who soaks up everything without discernment.
- The Funnel, who takes everything in and then lets it all out again with no retention or application.
- The Strainer, who lets out the wine and keeps the sediment, meaning that they only retain the irrelevant.
- The Sifter who extracts the coarse flour (the erroneous teaching) and keeps the fine flour (the true teaching).

God, in His grace, has given us everything we need for life and godliness. He has established standards and objectives so that His people might become mature, defend the faith, and constantly grow in His grace.

He alone is worthy of our devotion (2 Pet 1:2-11; 3:14-18)! Let us seek to receive from our Lord, the greatest commendation any disciple can receive, **“Well done, good and faithful bondservant!”** (Matt 25:21).

The initial question of this chapter, “How should we seek to live within The Church,” has been answered in very practical ways. One of the keys is that there is a lot of freedom in form to carry out the functions the Lord desires.

It would be good to refer once again to the **God vs Matter Chart** because we have expanded all the concepts initially introduced. As Believers in Jesus Christ we have found the **Truth**, which is recorded in His infallible and totally inspired Word. His Word lets us escape from the **Deception** of the world and proceed so that instead of trying to **Change** our **World**, we have a **Changed Life**. Changed lives for God will change the world because of an honest **Service** that is done out of thanksgiving for what our King did on our behalf.

Changed lives become **Transformed** into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ instead of being **Conformed** to living like the unsaved world. Our new lives learn to **Love God and Others** in His creation, in an ever-growing manner.

The final result is a **Hope** that serves as an “anchor of the soul” (Heb 6:17-19) so it is a confident expectation that the Lord will fulfill His Word. Biblical hope is not wishful thinking but a faith concerning future things that God has promised to accomplish concerning time and eternity.

This **Hope** becomes more fully realized as Christ is formed in the life of the Believer (Col 1:27). The result is a **Peace** of soul that surpasses all human understanding (Php 4:6-7). This **Peace**, that only comes from Christ Who is our **Peace** (Eph 2:14), is to rule in our hearts so acquiring it is of primary importance in the Christian life (Col 3:15-17).

Several of the writers of Scripture leave us with prayers and comments concerning their spiritual desire for Believers to experience this **Peace**. They often connect this **Peace** with other important exhortations that we have explored throughout this study.

Paul writes: *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* Romans 15:13

Peter writes: *“May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.”* 1 Peter 1:2

James writes: *“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”* James 3:17-18

John writes: *“Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”* 2 John 3

Jude writes: *“Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: ² May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.”* Jude 1-2

⁶⁹ Perkei Avot, Mishna 18, Chapter 5

Jesus says: *“When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”*²⁰ *And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”*²¹ *Jesus therefore said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’”*²² *And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.”*²³ *If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.’”*²⁴ *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”*²⁵ *The other disciples therefore were saying to him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’”*²⁶ *And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, ‘Peace be with you.’”*²⁷ *Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.’”*²⁸ *Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”*²⁹ *Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.’”* “ John 20:19-29

Finally, the writer of Hebrews closes the book in a wonderful benediction about the God of Peace: *“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,”*²¹ *equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* Heb 13:20-21

May this prayer be realized in us, that we may honor the Lord in all our thoughts, speech, and actions!

Appendix: Evolution

A. Authors and Early Proponents

The following people are named and their opinions stated so the student will have some concept of how this thinking got into modern society. This discussion is not meant to be exhaustive but is provided so the student will have a little more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

James Hutton (1726-1797), wrote *Theory of the Earth* in 1795. He was a physician turned geologist (one who studies the physical nature of the earth), was very weak in astronomy (study of the stars), and assumed that the earth never had global catastrophes (like the Flood of Noah). His work was not accepted, except by Charles Lyell.

Charles Lyell (1797-1875), wrote the three-volume *Principles of Geology* in 1830 and decided to measure things in millions of years. He dated the "Ice Age" around 1,000,000 B.C. and said that it was caused by snowflakes over millions of years. The means of measurement he employed, known as the "geological clock" was Niagara Falls, one of the world's largest waterfalls located in New York State, USA. A "geological clock" is a physical thing that one observes to see how it changes over time. He was told that the river cut into the river bed at the rate of three feet per year. After he wrote his work, he observed it to be only one foot per year and changed the date of the "Ice Age" to 35,000 B.C. He had assumed an equal rate of cutting into the river bed and did not account for yearly changes in rainfall. He assumed that the erosion of the river bed was uniform throughout its history and didn't consider changes in the weather. It is an early example of bad reasoning being used to interpret data.

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) studied with Lyell and tried to reconcile biology (the study of life) with geology. He wrote *Origin of the Species* in 1859. The result of his study is called "Darwinism." "Darwinism" came from a worldview of "Uniformitarianism," (more below) which came from "Secular Humanism" (Atheism). The basis of his theory was (1) Lyell's non-catastrophic view called Uniformitarianism, (2) Lamarck's proposition of acquired genetic characteristics (more later), and (3) his own observations on the voyage of the ship, the HMS Beagle. This book was so well received that Karl Marx, the Communist, tried to dedicate his book *Das Kapital* to Darwin but he refused because of what his family and friends would think.

B. The Seven Requirements of Evolution (All of these must be true for Evolution to be true)

All of these must be true for Evolution to be true. This is not stated by any who believe in evolution as the Ultimate Cause of all things, but the main points are dependent upon one another, so if one item fails they all fail. The last point is the fatal flaw in the theory.

1. Geological Uniformitarianism (A required consistency)

This says that all natural processes presently in operation are sufficient to account for all geological changes. This viewpoint is opposed by Catastrophism which believes that the earth has been affected by sudden physical forces such as cyclones and floods. Often a person can simply look at the catastrophes within one's own lifetime to see their impact on people and physical things. The tsunami that began in Malaysia in 2004 is one such example. The volcanic eruption of Mount St. Helen's in Washington State, USA, in 1980 has produced an abundance of evidence that has seriously challenged the position of Uniformitarianism. Dr. Steve Austin has done a tremendous amount of research on the aftermath of the explosion in which he shows that change in the environment can occur quite rapidly and does not take millions of years.⁷⁰ Evolution does not consider catastrophes in their conclusions.

2. Survival of the Fittest (The importance of power)

This requirement of Evolution states that only the most adaptive and prolific of the genetic strains survived. This position must be tested with the fossil record. By any scientific standards the fittest did not survive but many of them were thrown together in a cataclysm. The "Woolly Mammoth" is one such example of "the fittest," but is now extinct. To be fair evolutionists do not equate the "fittest" with strength, but rather by the adaptability of the species to the environment. They believe if the species didn't adapt the species wasn't the "fittest." They change their definitions of fitness to "adapt" to their theory. This is not a legitimate way to arrive at truth.

⁷⁰ John Morris, *Footprints in the Ash: The Explosive Story of Mount St. Helens*, 2003

3. **Environmental Determinism** (Nature dictates change)

Developed by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829), this belief is that conditions in the environment control and govern changes in the natures of animals and plants through the increased use of some organs and the decreased use of others and that the changes were transmitted genetically to the offspring. This was the supposed biochemical mechanism and was the backbone of the hypothesis for 50 years. Gregor Mendel's (1822-1884) principles of heredity were rediscovered by Hugo DeVries (1848-1935) and those studies showed this theory was wrong. Behavior Modification in psychology came from this philosophy which believes that if the environment is changed then all decisions will be changed as well. This view believes that a better environment will produce better people and that basically volitional decisions are always only responses to one's environment and that pure acts of will do not exist.

4. **Natural Selection** (Breeding within species results in the fittest)

This theory was viewed to be the best way to develop superior strains. This concentrates hereditary characteristics but has been shown to not be beneficial. Nothing tears down a strain faster than inbreeding (offspring produced from close relatives) and nothing builds it faster than cross-breeding. Any genetic disruption that leads to a mutation is usually not superior in the animal kingdom. Darwin assumed a 50-50 ratio of superior to inferior, but in fact it has been shown to rarely be superior and almost always inferior. Darwin married his cousin and had 10 children seeking to prove the position. One child died shortly after birth, one in childhood, his youngest son had mental problems (lived 2 years), one had a nervous breakdown at 15 and, three were considered semi-invalid by Darwin himself. His last son died at 15 months. His father's parents were 2nd cousins (his reasoning must have been that if you look at me it must have worked for them!). Inbreeding can have some disastrous results. One example is Herr Heidler who married his niece and begat Adolf Heidler (the one who said "The bigger the lie, the more people will believe in it"). We knew him as Adolph Hitler.

Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), a noted scientist attributed with many great discoveries such as vaccination) wrote Darwin of his objections but was ignored. Louis Agassiz, the most noted naturalist of his day (1807-1873) refuted Darwin in a series of lectures at Harvard University USA, but ruined his own reputation in the process. The theory was so rapidly "sold" to the public that those who fought it were labeled heretics. Darwin became so popular that he didn't have to prove anything, so he didn't.

5. **Comparative Embryology**

This says that a parallelism exists in the development of mammalian embryos and that the same organs all develop in a sequential pattern, so they must have evolved from a common ancestor. An equally valid interpretation of the data is that they came from a common designer.

6. **Missing Links** (the pieces of the fossil record that have not been found to prove the transition from one species to another)

These "links" of change are still missing. The skeletal systems of fossil men are clearly out of scale with modern man and were reasoned to be the "missing links." It is interesting to note that all of these "missing links" have been proven false. Even if the explanation of these fossils were true it is easily explained by various skeletal disorders that are still present today.

Some comments on the "Missing Links:"⁷¹

- "Nebraska Man" – Was actually made from a single pig's tooth.
- "Piltdown Man" – Was exposed as a hoax.
- "Java Man" – Discovered in 1892 was made from one tooth from a man plus two teeth that proved later to come from an orangutan. The model was built based on presuppositions.
- "Peking Man" – Known as *Homo Erectus* but was formerly known as *Sinanthropus Pekinensis* and claimed to be early Chinese was later shown by DNA (biological material which makes up the structure of cells in the human body) to be African.
- "Neanderthal man" – Tests conducted on surviving Neanderthal DNA have shown little similarity to the DNA of modern humans. Neanderthal man is actually classed as totally human with no ape DNA, so it is not a missing link.

⁷¹ Mark Cahill, *One Heartbeat Away*, 2007, pp 38-40

- “Lucy” – Only jawbone fragments, upper and lower teeth and a thighbone were found in 1974. Top scientists like Richard Leakey say “Lucy” is not the missing link.

Dr. Colin Patterson (1933-1998), director of the British Museum of Natural History, a highly respected evolutionist, wrote a book about the theory of Evolution. When asked why his book didn't include any illustrations of transitional fossils, Dr. Patterson, who has seven million fossils in his museum said, “I fully agree with your comments on the lack of direct illustration of evolutionary transitions in my book. If I knew of any, fossils or living, I certainly would have included it... I will lay it on the line. There is not one such fossil for which one might make a watertight argument.”⁷² Later, he claimed to have been quoted out of context, but could still not produce a transitional fossil.

Niles Eldridge (1943-present), a leading expert in vertebrate fossils, decided to honestly weigh the evidence. His conclusion, “No wonder paleontologists shied away from evolution for so long. It never seems to happen... when we see the introduction of evolutionary novelty, it usually shows up with a bang, and often with no firm evidence that the fossils did not evolve elsewhere! Evolution cannot forever be going on somewhere else. Yet that's how the fossil record has struck many a forlorn paleontologist looking to learn something about evolution.”⁷³

7. Author's Comments

This author has been told by a recent college graduate that there were millions of transitional fossils. That is what he was taught in college. I asked him for “links” to internet sites to prove his position, but those “links” are still “missing.” They do not exist but it seems that college professors are even lying to their students in order to promote this unsubstantiated theory. If you are taught this do not hesitate to ask for the proof.

⁷² Dr. Colin Patterson, letter to Luther D. Sunderland, April 10, 1979

⁷³ Niles Eldridge, *Reinventing Darwin: The Great Debate at the High Table of Evolutionary Theory*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1995, p 95

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