

*Lives and Times of
The Bible*

or

“Biblical Synchronicity”

An Approach to the Faith of our Fathers

Book II

A Study of Scripture in Greater Depth

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2021

Disclaimer

The bible was, of necessity, written in compressed form. Its' authors, arguably aware of causes vs. effects and problems vs. solutions, chose not to include some information in their written efforts. Therefore, the research efforts required to produce this book were efforts intended only to uncover some of that information.

No attempt was made to use only information supporting the doctrine or theological position of any denomination. There was effort made to use sources considered reliable and that were not known to be intentionally controversial. Therefore, any information found contrary to any standard doctrinal thought is simply a report of what was found.

The author's only intention has been to discover what supposed objectively oriented authors had to say about the topic.

Quoting a theological friend, "Place the plow to the field and let's see what turns up."

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the help of friends and family in researching and writing the material in this book. Son, David and wife, Jodi for their considerable help and advice in page set up, locating and researching sources of information; for help in vetting both significant information and significant authors; for their patience waiting while I labored over such concerns as the rephrasing of split infinitives, dangling participles, concept structure, point-of-view, etc.

Grandson, Joshua for his invaluable help repairing, at a distance, an aging and cantankerous computer.

The completed document would indeed be different without their invaluable help.

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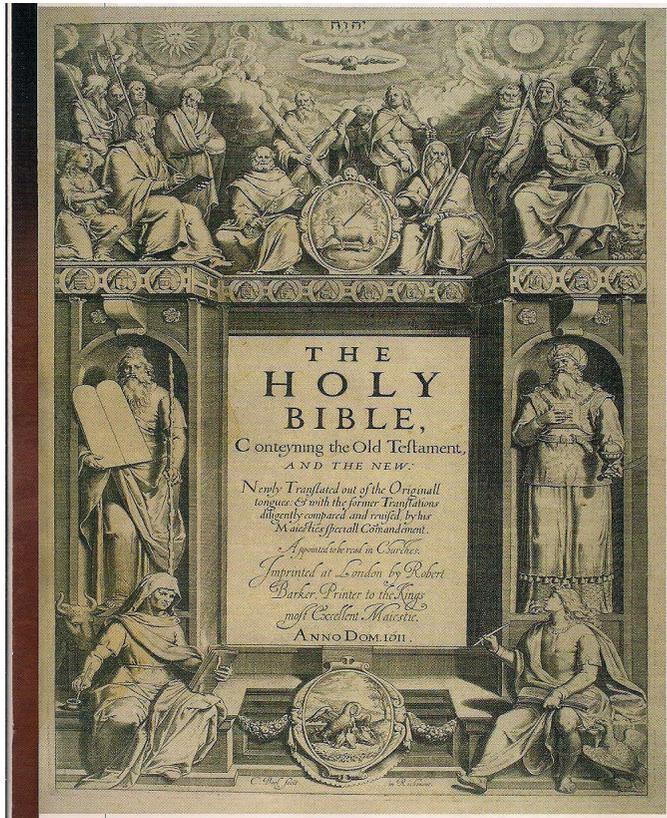
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Preface

The lessons contained in this small work represent the research efforts of one man. Being the son of a minister, having received a rich research-based education in the secular academic world, and spending fifty plus years teaching in both secular and non-secular colleges and universities have given the author at least these four essentials for Christian instruction:

- A knowledge of research methods
- An academic curiosity to learn about one's world
- A spiritual curiosity to *know more about God*
- A desire to follow a former professor's instruction:
Dig until fact gives way to opinion; then, present the opinion as such if it logically seems helpful and let the receiver decide its' value.

How We Got The King James Bible



It is the single most influential volume in history. The Spanish Armada had just been defeated; England and Scotland were united for the first time in history; Shakespeare was at his peak of writing and popularity; Sr. Francis Bacon was perfecting the scientific method as a new protocol for the discovery of truth.

Religion vs. government vs. Denominationalism was agitating the peace. Folk believed God had chosen James VI to unite the realm and keep it united.

To Understand the Book He Favored, one must understand the Man: For a while, James was both James VI, King of Scotland and James I of England – a neat feat if one can pull it off. This was true when he was 36 or 37 yrs. old, depending on the source.

KingJames

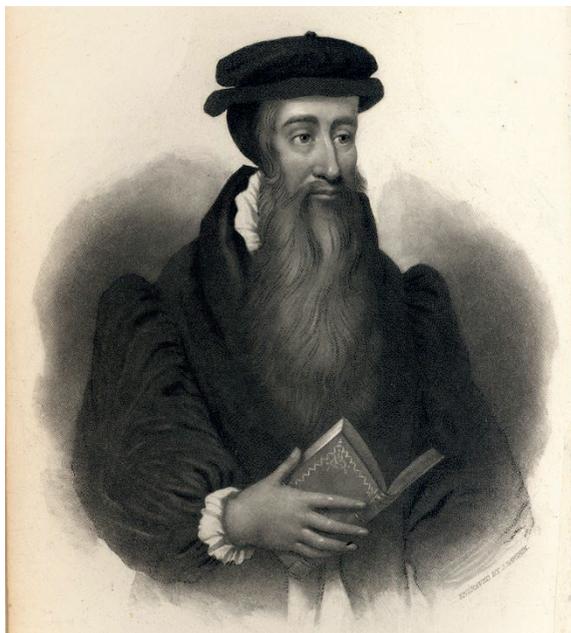


Getty Images

He was crowned King of Scotland when he was just a toddler, “The Boy King.” John Knox, the reformer, a neighbor living on the same street in

Edinburgh as did James, gave a fiery sermon in his support. Knox's cathedral, too, was located on the same street.

John Knox



Getty Images

His Parents: His mother and his father were both killed for political reasons. His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, lay in her bed while her secretary-lover, David Rizzo was brutally murdered in an adjoining room. Mary heard his dying screams.

His father, Henry Darnley, was thought to have been murdered by Mary's next lover, the Earl of Bothwell, blown up as Henry lay ill in his Edinburgh home. They found his body in a lot next door the next day.

James was one year old when last he saw his mother. From that moment on he endured a series of terrifying Presbyterian Governors – teachers. He was regularly beaten during his studies.

Mary Queen of Scots



Getty Images

His Education: While one such governor, George Buchanan, a European intellectual, beat him at his lessons, he also shaped James' mind. James became an intellectual known for his skill in theological debate; believed in the divine right of kings; possessed wide learning.

James learned to speak Greek and Latin; composed Renaissance poetry; translated the Psalms. He often would translate the Bible from Latin to French and then from French to English – as an after-dinner past-time.

Holyrood Palace (home of Mary Queen of Scots)



Getty Images

His Character and Personality: He understood clearly, judged wisely, had a retentive memory, asked penetrating questions, possessed lofty ideals, and had a very high opinion of himself – and one might say, not without cause.

He often descended into vulgar conversation in front of women, exhibited crude manners and was uncivil in polite company.

James was feeble but not frail. He was physically ugly, red-headed, skin was pale; he had a thick tongue, was at once impatient, vulgar, clever, nervous. One source says, **he was an old young man**. His motto was *Blessed are the peacemakers*. A study in opposites.

An irony: his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, having learned of her son's accession to Scotland's throne, wrote to him offering to co-rule with him. Remember she had not seen him since he was one year old. He declined her offer. She was eventually sent into exile from which she was returned and executed.

Mary Queen of Scots Death Mask



from the Castles of Scotland images

The King James Bible, Like Flames Himself, was Born Amid

Controversy: The King James Bible was "born" in a conference held at

Hampton Court on the then outskirts of London in January of 1604.

Elizabeth had emboldened the English Reformation begun under Henry VIII, trying (unsuccessfully) to stave off a religiously motivated civil war.

It didn't work!

At one end of a religious/political spectrum were the disenfranchised Catholics, disenfranchised from the Church of England. At the opposite end were the Puritans who felt the reformation hadn't gone far enough. Puritans felt James might be their political/spiritual Champion, having been brought up under Presbyterian tutelage. But James had "seen enough of Puritanism." He disliked both them and their theology.

Balmoral Palace



Getty Images

The only thing that kept him from dealing harshly with the Puritans was the fact that the Puritans were both a sizable minority and well educated – a rarity in those days.

Hampton Court, London

Where King James first met with KJV translators.
(Second floor to the immediate right.)



Getty Images

Hampton Court as it appears today.



Getty Images

If at First you Don't Succeed, Try, Try Again: Elizabeth had appointed a group of Bishops to prepare a bible free of political content, difficult or impossible to do in those days. They prepared it, **The Bishop's Bible**, but it was offensive to some and was summarily hated by others.

Exiles were invited back from Switzerland, where they had translated the **Geneva Bible**. Some exiles were Puritans – not a complement. Today, they would have been dubbed, “Goody Two-Shoes.” They were neither a party nor a denomination.



Getty Images - by Godong

Puritans wanted no ceremony in Services.

They wanted simple services locally controlled.

They wanted Direct relationship between each individual and God. (That sounds good.)

All in opposition to the Church of England.

Attendance at the Church of England was required of both Puritans and Catholics. (That had to hurt!)

In fact, non-attendance could get you “the stake.” (That might motivate one’s desire to attend church.)

James the Tight-Rope Walker: James had inherited much of this religious/political chaos.

- a. Catholics wanted the Church of England to change allegiance back to Roman control.
- b. Puritans wanted further distance from Rome AND the Church of England.
- c. Puritans wanted to do away with the power of English Bishops, elitists, and their wealthy privilege.
- d. Parliament wanted to expand its’ power base (remember the Divine Right of Kings was under fire).
- e. The Plague was to cause at least 30,000 deaths in and around London. Many saw these deaths as God’s judgment on England.
(Hmm)

But There’s More, much more.

John Smyth from Gainsborough was preaching and organizing a group of Lincolnshire farmers about baptism. The Church of England, soon after a child was born, would baptize it into the church making it both a citizen and a target for taxation.

These few farmers complained that baptism was intended to show the world the individual had become a believer, a Christian. So, these few folks would re-baptize the individual whenever that person declared a personal faith but only as a Christian and not subject to taxation.

These few folks, operating between 1610 – 1620 (the same time period as the translation of the KJV) came to be called Anabaptists, the re-baptizers. Needless to say, the Church of England and James I were not at all happy.

There's Still More:

The Hampton Court Conference on translation met for the first time on May 20, 1604. Within four months, a group of Catholics met in London's *Duck and Drake Pub* where they hatched a plot, later to be called "The Gunpowder Plot", to blow up Parliament. They were found. (To this day, on May 20th each year, members of the English Parliament march through the basement of the Parliament building looking for gunpowder knowing full well there is no such plot to unmask.)

This set the stage for a 30 Years' War that would begin in 1618, just 14 years after the Hampton Court Conference had begun and 7 yrs. after the KJV. It would be the last of the Post Reformation Religious Wars; Elizabeth's "Settlement" hadn't worked!

CONSEQUENCES

- In 1642, the English Civil War began.
- James' son, Charles, was arrested and
- Imprisoned in Hampton Court (of all places).
- He spent his honeymoon there – Imprisoned.
- Charles was executed by Parliament under Oliver Cromwell, a Puritan, and all of Europe was horrified.

England's Civil War



Getty Images

Sixteen years after the Hampton Court Conference, some of the dissenters (Puritans), left for America. It was 1620. The KJV had been in print for 9 years, and they had contributed significantly to its' translation. But they carried with them three copies of **The Geneva Bible**. (How does one spell *Double-Cross*?)

Meanwhile: Back at the Ranch! Talk About a Grand Entrance!

James in Scotland, received word of Elizabeth's death (she was his cousin) and of him, James, being named by her as her successor. She had waited nearly until her last breath to make the announcement.

James started April 5, 1603 on his trip to London from Edinburgh. What should have taken three days took him over a month.

Along the way, Puritans approached him with a petition signed by 1000 clergy (10% of all clergy in the land) outlining their grievances. It was called The Millenary Petition. That petition would lead to the Hampton Court Conference eventually producing The King James Bible.

The petition called for an overhaul of the church's worship ministry, finances, especially of the bishops, and of church discipline.

They were asked to stop giving the Pope's opinions as a legally binding part of worship; no bowing whenever Jesus' name was mentioned; and to stop using Apocryphal biblical books.

So, On to Hampton Court Conference :

James had been in office from April, 1603 until October, 1603, 7 months, when he called the Hampton Court Conference.

Clearly, James had gotten the "point" of the Puritan Millenary Petition.

The Conference was a BIG DEAL! Cardinal Wolsey in 1515 built the court 15 miles SW of London while under Henry VIII. It required 2500 laborers to construct, included 1000 rooms and required a staff of 500.

James came there in the opening phases of the conference for both Christmas and New Year's celebrations in 1603. Shakespeare's Kings Men Players (so named because James had given him his sponsorship) acted there; Shakespeare acted there himself in *A Midsummers Night's Dream* on New Year's Day.

Rainolds [Images Art UK]



James' Opinions During Opening Celebrations: James, irritated by some demands of the Puritans, bellowed, *No Bishop, No King!* Meaning, without Bishops, the King himself could not exist.

Rainolds, a Puritan, had been standing nearby. The king turned to Rainolds and said *If this be all your party hath to say, I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harrie them out of the land, or else do worse.*

Rainolds, ever the compromiser, suggested a new bible translation, and James warmed to the idea. Smart man - Rainolds!

Bancroft, there also, and a scourge of Puritans, first spoke against the idea. But, after learning how James felt about it, Bancroft quickly changed his mind (wise decision).

Richard Bancroft, [Translator]
Archbishop of Canterbury



Wikipedia Images

EXISTING TRANSLATIONS:

Latin Vulgate - It was translated by St. Jerome back in the 5th century. It was, at the time of King James, the official version used by the Catholic Church, mostly for formal occasions.

Rheims New Testament - It was a 1582 English translation of the **Vulgate**.

Geneva Bible Dated, 1509 – 1564. It was written by John Calvin in Geneva Switzerland. That, because Queen Mary had persecuted the Protestants into leaving England.

James despised the Geneva Bible, though it was quite popular among Puritans. He thought the commentaries in its' marginal notes were

subversive (read on, they WERE subversive). One problematic marginal note related to Rev 11:7. It read *the Pope which hath his power out of hell and cometh hence*.

Problem: James was being pressured into including Puritans on his now-forming KJV translation board. Further, though James could not have known it at the time, in 1620, the Puritans would take a copy of the Geneva Bible with them to America, not the new KJV to which they had made major contributions.

Pilgrims and their Geneva Bible



by Christian Lambert

King James' Dangerous Political Issues:

Issue # 1: Dangerous Translation Issues:

- (1) Church of England's 23rd Psalm: *God is my shepherd; therefore, I can lack nothing. He will cause me to repose myself in pasture full of grass, and he will lead me into calm waters.*
- (2) Protestants' 23rd Psalm: *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to rest in green pasture and leadeth me by the still waters.*
- (3) Catholic 23rd Psalm: *Dominus regret me et nihil mihi deerit (the Lord rules me and I shall want nothing) in loco pascuae ibi me conlocavit (he has set me in a place of pasture).*

Note: the difference is between a shepherd who leads followers by still waters and a ruler who puts one out to pasture.

To us in the 21st century, little difference; but in the 17th century, it could get you burned at the stake!

Issue # 2: Politically, how should they refer to a king in scripture?

- (1) England, a near Monarchy, used king or a king's name, e.g.,
And when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the lord appeareth in a dream . . .
- (2) **Geneva Bible:** (anti-monarchical – whereas Geneva was democratic). Printed *tyrant* for king 400 times.

For Rev 11:7 *Beast of the bottomless pit,*

Printed: *The Pope which hath his power out of hell and cometh hence. . .*

Issue # 3: A near fist-fight over meanings of individual words.

(1) *Agape* has no direct English translation.

(2) 1604 Catholic Scholar Thomas Moore (1494-1536) argued that it meant *charity* – implying a need for works on the part of the believer as related to redemption.

(3) 1604 William Tyndale believed redemption was a matter of faith; so, *love* was the better choice.

Love won! The debate was loud, rancorous. Now, the doctrines of many modern denominations in the 21st century rest in part on this decision.

Conclusion:

For years, the **Bishops Bible** and **Geneva Bible** continued to be the favorite ones used. Adam Nicholson, British author of *God's Secretaries*, said the KJV was a catastrophe, universally loathed.

Catholic exiles chose the **Douay-Rheims** instead of the KJV.

There were printing errors:

1. It was called the Wicked Bible: e.g., *Thou shalt commit adultery.*
2. *Hoopes* for *hooks* was printed.
3. *She* for *he* was printed.
4. *Judas* for *Jesus* was printed.

5. Robert Barker, printer had borrowed heavily to print the bible with King James' authority.

He was fined 3,000 pounds (\$54,400 at \$ 1.65 exchange rate).

His license was revoked, and he spent his life in Debtor's Prison for inability to pay his fine.

Other negative arguments:

American Physician Benjamin Rush called it R-rated because of many chapters in the OT that children should not read.

American politician John Adams said it was more than half "Catholic" and not a compliment to America.

In 1844, there were anti-Catholic riots (snipers on roof tops) in Philadelphia among protests about Catholics submitting to required reading of the KJV in public schools. Confusion about whether the snipers were pro or anti-Catholic.

In the 1760's there were 24,000 changes made to the KJV: commas, singulars/plurals; italics. Punctuation changes can make a major difference.

E.g., consider: *Woman without her man is a savage*. Without any punctuation, it says woman is a savage.

Try this: *Woman, without her, man is a savage*. Now, man is the savage. The entire meaning changed with only two commas. That or its' equivalent happened 24,000 times to the KJV in the 1700's.

Addenda # 1

RULES OF INTERPRETATION

These are the rules King James set up for the actual translation. They were predicated on the Bishop's Bible, in protest to the Puritan's own Geneva Bible. The Puritans were pushing for the new KJV to be written. Understandably, a significant struggle ensued.

1. Leave the texts used from the Bishop's Bible altered is little as permissible without changing the truth of the original.
2. Each man of each company was to translate independently; then meet all together and confer on what should stand.
3. As any one Company completed a book, they were to send it to all the rest to be considered even further.
4. For any doubted obscure portion, they should send letters of inquiry to any educated men of the nation for clarification.
5. Letters were to be sent from every Bishop to the rest of his clergy informing them of the new translation. They were asking any of them who were skilled in languages to send their own observations to the company either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford (the three Companies translating each one's own assigned portions).
6. Use mostly common Anglo-Saxon words, that could be easily read in the idiom of the day.
7. Keep ecclesiastical words, e.g., "Church", not "Congregation" (a Puritan term).

8. Keep any words commonly used by our spiritual patriarchs whenever they were agreeable to both propriety and the idiom of the faith.
9. Keep the chapter divisions as much as possible.
10. There were to be no biased notes included in the translation.
11. Any marginal notes should only be used as explanations of Hebrew or Greek words and then only when they could not be explained through implication in the text.

Addenda # 2

INTERPRETERS OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

King James chose 47 scholars including some Puritans. These 47 scholars were divided into six Companies: two at Westminster; two at Cambridge; two at Oxford.

Westminster Company I, located in London, translated Genesis – II Kings.

- Lancelot Andrewes, Director, Top Translator; (Most brilliant of his day (had been involved in the Galileo Affair).
- John Overall: Wife left him - eloped 1604.
- Hadrian Saravia
- Richard Clarke
- John Layfield
- Robert Tighe
- Geoffrey King

- Richard Thompson
- William Bedwell
- Francis Burleigh

Westminster Company II, located in London, translated New Testament Epistles.

- William Barlow, Director & fanatically anti-Puritan.
- John Spencer
- Roger Fenton
- Ralph Hutchinson (Pres. St. John's College, Oxford; died 1606).
- William Dakins; died 1607.
- Michael Rabbet
- Thomas Sanderson

Cambridge Company I: located in Cambridge, translated Chronicles – Song of Songs.

- Edward Lively, Director; died 1606.
- John Richardson
- Lawrence Chaderton, Puritan
- Roger Andrewes (Lancelot's brother).
- Thomas Harrison, Puritan
- Robert Spaulding
- Andrew Bing
- Francis Dillingham, Puritan

Cambridge Company II, located in Cambridge, translated the Apocrypha.

- John Duport, Director
- John Boys (or, Bois).
- William Branthwaite
- Andrew Downes
- Jeremiah Radcliffe
- Robert Ward
- Samuel Ward, Puritan

Oxford Company I, located in Oxford, translated Isaiah –to the end of OT.

- ❖ John Harding, Director
- ❖ John Reynolds (Rainolds, Puritan, died of Consumption, `1607).
- ❖ Thomas Holland, Puritan
- ❖ Richard Kilby
- ❖ Miles Smith, Puritan (wrote the Preface).
- ❖ Richard Brett
- ❖ Richard Fairclough (or, Featley).

Oxford Company II, located in Oxford, translated the Gospels, Acts, Revelations.

- Thomas Ravis, Director
- George Abbot
- Richard Eedes (died before contributing)
- Giles Tomson

- Sir. Henry Savile (the only non-clergyman-Translator)
- John Peryn (or Perne)
- Ralph Ravens
- John Harmar, Puritan
- Leonard Hutten
- John Aglionby
- James Montague (or Montagu), Puritan

For additional information on the subject, see, *Christian History*, Issue 100, 2011.



Peter! A fisherman from Bethsaida.

Question: *Have you ever said or done something for which you were immediately and terribly sorry – you just didn't get the point in time – that you didn't mean to hurt the one you respected or loved?*

Well, Peter did that – A LOT! This will be a study of Peter.

Peter and his brother, Andrew, were in the fishing business in Capernaum. They were probably partnering (silent) with James and his brother John in the business owned and operated by Zebedee and his wife, Salome.

Zebedee and Salome probably owned the boat Peter, et. al. were fishing in that fateful day at Lake Gennesaret.

Salome had a famous sister and brother-in-law, Mary and Joseph. That makes James and John Jesus' cousins. Salome appeared at Jesus' crucifixion.

Cast Net Fishing



Cast your nets on the other side. (Getty Images)

One writer believes Salome probably funded some of the costs of Jesus' ministry. That can't be proven, though. Zebedee and company owned a fleet of fishing vessels. If each vessel was manned by four men, then he had a payroll of 16-20 persons. The company was well-to-do.

Foundations are of Peter's home.



Image by Israel 21c

Top-to-Bottom: Visitor's Center and Peter's House-Church; Supposed Foundation of Peter's House; Foreground: Foundation of Synagogue where Peter, Jesus, Zebedee et. al. likely worshipped.

Zebedee was thought to have had a contract with the Jewish and Roman officials nearby to supply fresh fish daily for their dining pleasure.

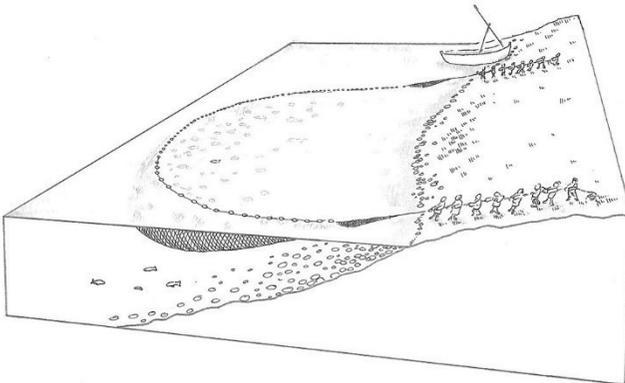
Peter likely went back to fishing temporarily after the resurrection. He kept his home during the discipleship period and returned there after each tour.

Peter was married and had two children, daughters. He, at times, took his wife with him on missionary journeys (Cor. 9:5). Some think Jesus stayed in Peter's home at times (Mt. 8:14).

The Call: Peter was called early in Jesus' ministry. One day, Jesus watched (cf. Luke 5) as Peter fished with James, John and Andrew. There stood Peter, meaty hands, weather folds in his sun-reddened neck; shore-fishing.

They would attach one end of a long net to something on shore, perhaps a person.

The other end of the net would be fastened to a boat just off shore. One partner (Peter? Or Andrew?) would tend the shore-line attachment while the other partners would row the boat in a semi-circle out in the lake and trap fish in the net as they drew the boat to shore a distance away.



With four men, two nets could be attached allowing the boat to “launch out into the deep” farther from shore.

They had toiled all night with no success when Jesus asked them to launch out into the deep and let down their net.

Jesus calling of Peter and Andrew



Free Bible Images

Peter, with no thought processing involved, instantly obeyed. *Master*, he said, *we have worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, (even so, at thy will . . .) we will let down the nets.*

They did, and the nets were breaking with the weight of the haul of fish. Peter and Andrew called for their partners, James and John to help them.

Peter blurted out in shock *Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man.* Or, paraphrased, **Boy! Am I in over my head!** He likely saw his own weakness in contrast to the perfection of Jesus.

Jesus responded, *Don't be afraid. From now on you will catch men.*

Peter didn't quibble. He pulled his boat up onto the shore and followed Jesus.

The Expressed Personality: Of the 12, Peter dominates our attention.

He often spoke for the other eleven (Mt. 15:15). The collectors of the

Temple Tax came to Peter as the leader of the disciples (Mt. 17:24). In fact, Peter is prominent in 15 episodes of scripture.

It is Peter who proposed the 12th disciple (Jn. 1:15-17). At the Passover meal recorded in Luke 22:8, Peter and John are the ones Jesus asked to make the preparations.

Peter became one of the inner circle of Jesus' followers. He was present when Jesus healed Jairus' daughter. Jairus was the Synagogue Ruler in the Capernaum Synagogue next door to Peter's own home and where Peter and (perhaps) Jesus had worshipped.

Present at the healing were Peter, James and John, all fishermen (Lk 8:51). In the next chapter of Luke, Ch 9, Jesus called all of his disciples in and gave them each and all power over demons -- power to heal. Peter received this power, too.

Intermittent Confusion: Peter wasn't all that sure of himself. Though in the inner circle, he struggled with his relation to Jesus. As one can see in the picture showing Peter's House Church, the foundation of Peter's home, and in the foreground, the foundation of the Capernaum Synagogue, Peter was physically positioned between two physical churches just as he was caught between two divergent theological perspectives.

In Mark 8:27, Jesus and his disciples were on the road to Philippi, center of pagan worship of the god, Pan.

Philippi had been refurbished by Emperor Herod Philip, best son of Herod the Great. Probably discussing all of the gods being worshipped in the area, Jesus turned to his disciples to ask, *Whom to men say that I am?*

The answer, *some say Elias, or one of the prophets*. But Jesus asked, *whom say ye that I am?* (That's getting right down to it!)

Peter nearly stumbled over himself to say, ***Thou art the Christ!*** (meaning: Messiah). Jesus told them eventually that he must suffer and die; that after three days, he would rise again.

Didn't register with Peter! In fact, Peter rebuked Jesus for what Jesus had just said. Massive social error, to -- even mistakenly -- rebuke God!

So, Jesus returned the rebuke to Peter saying, *Get thee behind me Satan!* Stinging!

But Peter still didn't get it. He was expecting a physical kingdom, not a spiritual one. Peter, in fact, would not come to understand INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE GOD until Pentecost. And that was a way in the future.

Jesus took Peter, James and John up on a high mountain (probably a spur of Mr. Hermon). There, Jesus was transfigured, i.e., his clothing began to shine in white (like a white-out). Perhaps the shekinah of God was shining on Jesus. The purpose of the transfiguration was likely to strengthen Jesus for the ordeal of the cross.

Elijah appeared there along with Moses. They all talked with Jesus about Jesus' coming "exodus", i.e., the cross (both Elijah and Moses had had their own "exodus").

Moses had experienced a "transformation" on Mt. Sinai (Ex 34:35) and represented to Jesus the fulfillment of The Law.

Elijah had experienced his own transfiguration in the chariot of fire (II Kings 2:11) and represented to Jesus the OT prophesies of the Messiah.

Transfiguration *by Carl Heinrich*



Both were standing there, as if we were, saying to Jesus, *We know who you are. GO FOR IT!*

What was Peter doing? He was asleep!

Peter woke up with a start and proposed they build three tabernacles there in honor of the occasion. He missed the point again.

(There are three tabernacles there today.)

On to Gethsemane! The Mount of Olives is an integral part of the park known as Gethsemane. Jesus had predicted that he would be deserted by his own.

At that time, Peter had jumped to speak; indeed, others might desert him, but Peter would not! Peter clearly did not know himself as did Jesus.

Even so, Peter was permitted along with James and John (his old fishing buddies) to experience Gethsemane. Peter, wanting so much to please, went to sleep while Jesus agonized over what he must have understood awaited him on the day of Calvary.

It was night time, and one could have seen the flickering lights of lamps being carried by people approaching. It was Judas arriving with the High Priest and his entourage.

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss; Peter jumped to the defense, grabbed a sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest.

Obviously, Peter had aimed for the middle of Malchus' head. Had Malchus not ducked, or Peter's aim been awkward, church history would read differently today.

Judas betraying Jesus



from Hulton archives

As a side note, Peter's act was attempted murder, but Jesus' response was simply to pick up the severed ear and return it to its' rightful place on Malchus' head.

Peter's flashing temper had gotten him in trouble again. And Jesus had bailed him out -- again.

Not Once, not Twice, but Three Times: Peter positioned himself outside Pilot's Judgment Hall where a little slave girl sat tending a fire for warmth. She recognized Peter as one of Jesus' followers. Peter said no. She called Peter out as one of them. Again he said no. Finally, recognizing Peter's Galilean accent, she called him out again. For the third time, Peter denied Jesus.

Instantly understanding what he had just done, Peter ran off into the night weeping. In spite of Peter's hair-triggered temper, Peter loved his Lord.

Peter was a Victim of His own Nature: Peter was impulsive flashing hot to the defense. He did minimal thinking before he acted; yet, he was eager to please. He was tender-hearted weeping at his own inadequacies. He was gifted with spiritual insight; yet, he often missed deeper spiritual truths there to be known.

He did not want to prepare much ahead of time seeking instead easy answers to life's complex problems.

Yet, Peter was specifically chosen by Jesus to be an initial follower. Jesus knew Peter was a diamond in the rough and chose him anyway.

Peter never left his home culture. He never stopped being a fisherman. In fact, it may have been Peter's struggles that helped him achieve greatness in the history of the church.

Today's Christians should be patient with personal struggles because it may just be the struggles that will permit God to refine them individually into a productive servant.

It's Post Pentecost, and Time's Running Out: After Pentecost, Peter was a different man. Peter preached with boldness. He participated in theological debate at the Council of Jerusalem (Jn 12). It is thought that he ministered in Asia Minor, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Bithynia, and with Paul in Italy.

He authored two books of sufficient quality as to be included in the canonized books we call the New Testament.

But Nero finally caught up with Peter. Peter's Lord had ascended 30 or so years ago. A new generation of young people was alive who had never seen his Lord.

Peter was in Rome. It was the mid-to-late sixties A.D., and Peter was condemned to spend time in the fetid prison called *Gemonium* or the *Tullian Keep*. Later it was named the *Mamertine Prison*. Three thousand years old, it was the oldest torcher chamber in existence.

Two cells deep, one beneath the other carved in solid rock and with an entrance only through a small aperture in the ceiling of each.

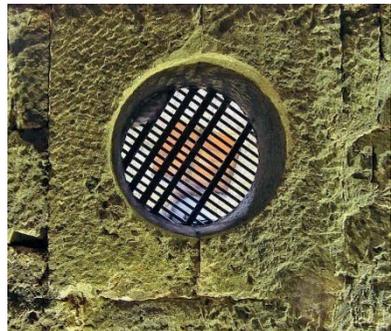
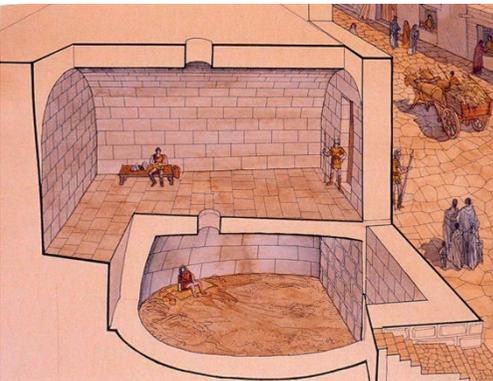
The lowest chamber was the death cell. Light NEVER entered it, and it was almost NEVER cleaned.



Gemonium Prison *(Getty Images)*

Prisoners would go mad in its' depths. Filth generated in the death cell fatally poisoned prisoners. It is said that the number of Christians who died there is beyond calculation.

A hole in the ceiling was where prisoners supposedly entered.



Getty Images

Peter, it is thought, was in this dungeon for nine months, manacled with chains to a post. He could neither sit nor lie down for nine months. Yet, Peter converted his two jailers, Processus and Martianus, plus 47 others while in this hell hole.

Saintly are Those Who Die in the Faith: It was 67 A.D. when Nero sentenced Peter to death by crucifixion (Nero likely did not get the irony). One author writes that Peter, having heard his sentence, straightened himself up before the court and declared, *Just don't crucify me like my Lord!*

Assuming its' truth, they crucified Peter – upside down – on an old rugged cross. The irony is beyond adequate description.

The Execution of the Apostle Peter



Getty Images

In death, this lowly fisherman; this burly, brusque, willful, tenderhearted, hot-tempered, embarrassed, loving fisherman became a symbol for his Lord.

The man who had said to his Lord, *even so, at thy will . . .* eventually had heard his Lord nearly quote him to HIS heavenly father, saying *even so, not my will . . .*

One author wrote, supposedly based on exacting Roman records, that as Peter was led out to his execution, he saw his wife being led to her own execution. Supposedly, Peter spoke to her saying, *Just think on the Lord. Just think on the Lord.*

Perhaps Peter eventually got the point that somewhere down through time, someone like you, the reader, might need someone to whom you, too, can turn with your burdens.

P.S.: The Apostle Paul and Peter were each executed in 67 A.D. in Rome. It was just 36 months later that the Romans invaded and sacked Jerusalem scattering Jews in all directions. They literally ran for their lives.

Israel ceased to exist as a nation in 70 A.D. and Israel did not come back together as a nation until 1948 after WW II under a charter granted them by the United Nations.

Three Temptations of Christ

Clue: It involves more than you think.

Sunday School teachers have for many years taught the three temptations of Christ as proof that he was tempted in similar ways as we. While there is a scintilla of truth to the thought, it fails to grasp the enormous depth and gravity tangent to the occurrence.

The Ordination of Jesus: John, The Baptizer, was in the process of baptizing followers in the Jordan River. John had been preaching *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin* (KJV).

Clearly a multitude of people had come to be baptized of John, but John's response was a rebuke, *Oh generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* (Lk 3:7, KJV) Clearly, baptism was for those truly repentant of sin, and John knew these folk were not repentant.

He refused to baptize numerous groups that day. They, in turn, began to wonder aloud whether John was the Christ.

John settled their curiosity with the statement, *I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire* (Lk 3:16 KJV).

While out in the water, and having baptized many folk, John must have spied Jesus standing on the river bank. Jesus was then 30 years old, an age when young men aiming for the ministry would declare their intent.

As Jesus was baptized there by John, the Holy Ghost descended looking like a dove and landed on Jesus. A voice from the heavens spoke saying *Thou art my beloved son: in thee I am well pleased* (Lk 3:22, KJV).

The Induction Internship of Jesus: After the baptismal ceremony, Jesus was led of the spirit into the wilderness – into seclusion. What Jesus was to experience was for him alone and not to involve the public.

Temptation # 1:

Turn this stone into bread (Lk 4:3 KJV).

Jesus had been there for 40 days, and he was hungry. There are numerous issues present in this temptation.

First, it carried a condition, “if thou be the Son of God. . .” Acquiescence to this request would have assumed Satan had authority over Jesus. Jesus’ appropriate response was both swift and certain: *It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God* (Lk 4:4, KJV).

Second, Satan’s statement assumes we can feed men and then ask of them virtue. Both freedom and bread for every human would have been a serious dilemma. Men must remain free NOT to choose what is best for them. Enough bread for everyone would have destroyed their freedom to choose.

Jesus had refused to establish social justice by sacrificing man's freedom-to-choose for bread.

Temptation # 2:

To Worship Satan in Return for Possession of the World's Kingdoms (Lk 4:5-7 KJV)

Again, Jesus' response was rapid and unequivocal: *Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."*

The phrase, "Get thee behind me Satan" would be used again by Jesus, this time responding to a rebuke by Peter. Again, more than one issue is involved.

First, to have agreed with Satan, would have been to have elevated Satan to a position of authority superior to both Jesus and Jesus' Heavenly Father.

Second, it would have presumed to have placed the control of the world's kingdoms under the control of one man, Jesus – who himself would have been subservient to Satan. In brief, it was a scam in which Satan would have remained ruler of the world with Jesus acting as his puppet.

Third, man craves universal unity. It is a desire underlying all society over eons of time. But in refusing Satan's offer, Jesus preferred centuries of free thought to the spurious offer of a stable society. But no society is stable when a single personage controls it all.

In giving up his freedom to choose, mankind (and Jesus himself) would have been placed outside the providence of God. Therefore, a Christian, e.g., might act wrongfully but argue that he was only following divine orders because he did not (could not) choose.

The person who knows he chooses sin intuitively understands this relation with his creator because he also intuitively knows he could have chosen his Creator instead.

If Jesus had surrendered man's freedom to choose, he would have placed man in a position where he could neither turn to God nor away from God.

To know we sin is the first step toward faith and forgiveness.

Temptation # 3:

To Prove his Divinity by Casting Himself down from the Temple
(Lk 4:9-12, KJV)

Jesus must have been becoming irritated at such a spurious request. His answer, though, was both quick and accurate: *It is said, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."* (Lk 4:12 KJV)

First, Jesus established once and for all that HE, not Satan, was the one in charge.

Second, on a much deeper philosophical level, Jesus was referencing man's deepest need for survival. Man wants not only to live but to have something for which to live. Jesus would later teach that an "other-directed" life must be chosen by man having a free conscience – always

aware of both safety and danger – and having the ability to choose between them.

Unfortunately, there are times when man seems to prefer peace (perhaps even death) to the agony of having to choose between good and evil (or the lesser of two evils).

Man too often is willing to barter his freedom of choice for a “miracle mystery” type of authority where all things just work out perfectly.

Such Christians are in danger of trying to attain God via asceticism and prayer as a way to have power over God. Such persons would be in danger of being “lost.”

Such persons could then simply take what they should have earned or should have waited to be given. Such a condition would be anti-Christ. God lifts up man in history, not vice versa.

A Layman's Judgement:

The stakes in Jesus' three temptations could not have been higher. Jesus was the “Second Adam”. The first Adam had failed to respond appropriately to Satan's offer of the forbidden fruit. Simple obedience was all that was required. Adam (and Eve) both failed the test.

Had Jesus succumbed to either of Satan's temptations, God would have had to start over in preparing a redemptive plan for mankind.

The stakes could not have been higher. It places enormous value on Jesus' statement from the cross, ***My God! My God! Why hast THOU forsaken ME?*** (*emphasis added*). Jesus' desperation was palpable.

But Jesus did his job, and he did it with style!

God's Will!

The Problem: Most Christians likely assume they know how to discern the *Will of God*. But it is a much more complex concern than most think.

One portion of the problem focuses on the nature of fact vs. belief; on revealed truth vs. discovered truth; or on probability.

We believe in the validity of scripture, but it is quite difficult to identify in scripture the accurate “word of God.” The reason is that the current Christian bible is a translation-of-a-translation-of-a-translation, etc. over 2,000 years.

The scrolls found in the caves above the Dead Sea cannot be accurately declared the original word of God because no one knows how many copies and/or translations resulted in their existence.

Further, one must consider the various versions of the bible: *The Douay; the KJV; the NIV; the Dartmouth; the Phillips; the Septuagint; the Bishop's; the Good News, The Masoretic Texts* etc. They do not all agree with each other.

The language of the King James bible itself was reportedly altered 24,000 times during the 1700's.

However, discovered truth, i.e., the findings of probability, at their best, should not be allowed to undermine revealed truth.

Discovered truth, i.e., structured inquiry, is simply another way to “get at” the nature of God and his creation. Will we always be correct in this search? Certainly not! But we can, with repeated inquiries come closer and closer to what God intended and currently intends for man.

The following discussion will present probability as being unwittingly used by “the ancients” to determine God’s Will – just like many folks do today.

There is a difference between probable truth and ultimate truth.

Old Testament Methods:

Black vs. White Stones: Judges in the Old Testament legal system would sometimes use a series of two stones carried somewhere on their person to determine guilt or innocence.

One thought is that the judge would shake up the black and a white stones in a sack and release one stone. A white stone would be interpreted to mean innocence. The black stone indicated guilt.

The emergence of either stone was based on probability, but it was interpreted as God’s Will thus releasing the judge from accusations of bias.

Urim vs. Thummim (Urim: a curse; Thummim: not a curse).

No one knows exactly how these were used. Their use is sometimes referred to as “Casting Lots.” No one knows if the “Lots” were stones, sticks, or something else. The use of Urim and Thummim is referred to

70 times in the Old Testament and 7 times in the New Testament indicating the frequency of their use.

In the New Testament, Jesus' disciples cast lots to determine who would replace Judas in their group.

One protocol that might have been used was this: the priest or whoever was in charge might have as many stones as there were letters in the Hebrew Alphabet with a single letter on each stone. The person might cast the stones again and again into a small area until a word was spelled out among the stones. The priest might then interpret the spelled word as god's message to them.

Supposedly the use of Urim and Thummim declined in frequency of use following Babylonian exile as prophets gained more prominence.

Again, the procedure would have been based on probability where the stones could have been cast again and again until the desired outcome was seen.

Witches and Soothsayers: Saul visited a witch to determine whether or not he would be victorious in a pending battle with the Philistines, a battle coming on Mt Gilboa (1 Sam 28:7-20). In seeking an opinion from the occult, Saul had lowered himself to the bottom of the theological strata.

In explanation, there was a forest moon thought to have orbited a gas planet called Endor. Endor was thought to have been inhabited by small furry biped creatures known as Ewoks. Some may recall the Star Wars

movie including creatures called Ewoks. Clearly the authors of the Star Wars script had done their homework.

Saul had outlawed witchcraft threatening execution for anyone found practicing the black art.

So, Saul went to the witch of Endor seeking her advice. She must surely have recognized Saul as being the king. As expected, she initially declined to give Saul a reading because of his decree.

Saul assured her that she was safe from prosecution which seems to have been all the convincing she needed.

She told Saul he would lose both the battle and his own life. The King ignored the warning and went into battle. The question must be asked: why ask for the advice if one has no intention of following it?

Scripture presents the witch's advice as being accurate and predictable although modern churches properly decry witchcraft as being satanic.

Prophets, Judges and God's Will: Ezekiel (Chs.8-11) in Babylon saw a vision of the cherubim located at either end of the Arc of the Covenant coming to life and flying out of the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the entire sanctuary coming to rest at the Mount of Olives.

In another instance, Gideon (Judges 6:36) used a fleece to determine God's Will. Left all night, if in the morning it was dry and the surrounding ground was wet with dew, one conclusion was drawn. Left outside again, if in the morning the fleece was wet and the surrounding ground was dry, another conclusion was drawn.

(Judges 6:36-40) *Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said. . ". Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew."*

New Testament Methods: In Matthew 12:39 Jesus said, *A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.*

Then again, in Matthew 16:4 the same quotation is made indicating that asking for signs is not an appropriate method for finding God's Will.

Dr. Galen (90 A.D.) had a hospital in Pergamum, named Asklepiion. It was named after a god, a snake. He wrote a medical book that was used in part or in whole until approximately 1600 A.D. (the KJV was in the process of being translated then and was released to the public in 1611).

He had his patients sleep through the night while snakes crawled around them. Come morning, they were asked to tell associate doctors any dream (or nightmares) they had. That dream was assumed to have been a message from god telling them of their problem and/or its' cure.

Contemporary Methods: Some Christians say they "feel led" of God to act in a certain way. Another phrase related to this same thought is "He placed it on my heart."

Others have held their bible out in front of themselves, eyes closed, and let the bible fall open by itself. They then might place a finger on the bible allowing it to come to rest on a specific scripture, assuming the scripture indicated was a message from God regarding their dilemma. Some awkward “advice” has been reported from this procedure.

Some draw straws, flip coins, or throw dice to determine an outcome. Either and all of these are themselves probability procedures where the procedure may be repeated again and again until the desired outcome is reached.

A jury vote assumes that the accumulated strength of combined minds will render a true verdict.

Likewise, lie detectors are a current approach to truth – but not admissible in courts of law.

Coincidental events (synchronicity?) are sometimes thought to be caused by divine action. One popular fallacy taught in college is called the Post Hoc Fallacy: *Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc*, meaning: *After This, Therefore Because of This*. It assumes that if one event occurs followed by another similar event, the first event caused the second event.

Christians sometimes pray for some desired outcome. If the desired outcome happens, they assume God caused it. If the desired outcome fails to happen, they assume God said “no.”

On its' surface, this seems to be a fallacy, but it isn't necessarily one. The answer lies in the Christian checking out the circumstances to determine the probability of it being an action of God's.

Probability is a massive concept in humanity's approach to truth.

One thinking pastor once said, if the Christian is "walking in all of the light he has, then he should do what he wants to do, and assume the outcome was divinely inspired." The pastor's reference was to the scripture: *If ye abide in me and my word abides in you, you can ask what you will and it will be granted.*

The believer should not be lazy but actively seek righteousness; an *abiding* concept.

The Church at Colossae

A Largely Gentile Church

Let's Find it First: Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis were all Phrygian cities, part of the land mass between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. All were part of the Roman rule in Asia Minor.

All three cities stood within sight of each other and on either side of the River Lycus. They were six miles apart. Colossae straddled the river, upstream from Laodicea and Hierapolis by 12 miles.

The Lycus valley had two outstanding characteristics.

First, it had terrible earthquakes. In fact, in circa 60 A.D. an earthquake totally destroyed Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Laodicea, being quite wealthy and with Roman help, rebuilt itself each time it suffered an earthquake.

John, (Rev 3:17 {66-68 A.D.}) wrote that in her own eyes she had need of nothing. Laodicea was fully satisfied with herself.

John did not mention Colossae because it was gone, never having been rebuilt.

Hierapolis rebuilt due to its' wealth and strategic location.

The second characteristic of the Lycus River valley was that it was nearly choked with chalk. Floods would overflow the local geography and when the water receded, it left behind enormous amounts of chalk sediment.

The accumulation of chalk was so enormous that it buried ancient monuments, destroyed fertile land, diverted tributaries forming giant grottos and arches that could be seen 20 miles away.

Cultural Characteristics of the Area: The cultural characteristics of this area affects our understanding of Paul's ministry there. Hierapolis was both a trade center and a spa.

Chalk Deposits on the Lycus River Valley



Getty Images

Thermal Springs



Getty Images

Being a volcanic area, there were underground chasms from which were formed springs giving off hot vapors. People came from near and far to avail themselves of the springs' medicinal value.

Many were sent there from a medical school located in Laodicea, also the political center of the entire area.

TEMPLE OF APOLLO



In Hierapolis was a church called the Temple of Apollo. Artemis of Ephesus, 100 miles or so southwest was the mythological sister of Apollo, and both could prophesy.

The Temple of Apollo was intentionally built at the intersection of two major earthquake faults which gave off lethal (to both man and beast) amounts of carbon dioxide gas. Beneath was a cave with carved-out steps leading down to it from the temple.

Over the entrance to the cave were these words: *For you are descended from me and from Mopus, the founder of the city.* Mopus supposedly had been able to foretell the future.

Also, above the entrance to the cave was an inscription, ***The Gates of Hell*** (cf. A Modest Proposal). The inscription dedicated the cave and its' gates to Satan.

Resident priests would hold their breath and walk into the cave, then, returning to the surface unharmed, announce that they, like Jesus of Nazareth, had descended into hell and conquered it. The same scam was being done at the Temple of Delphi.

For a price, visitors could request a reading from the priests. In time, the priests found a pocket of fresh air in the cave which allowed them to remain there for extended periods of time before returning to the surface.

Note: Jesus' crucifixion occurred circa 37 A.D.. The date of Paul's visits to these nearby cities was circa 50 A.D., just 13 years after the resurrection. These vulnerable (and superstitious) people must have been quite confused in whom to believe, Jesus or local priests.

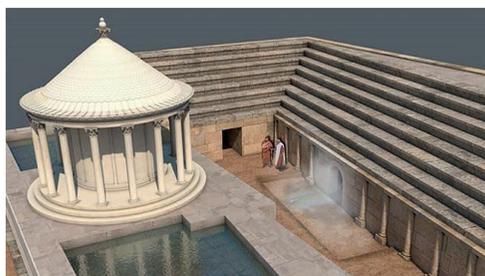
Colossae and its' Little Church of the Way: Paul's emissary, Epaphroditus, probably established the church in Colossae. Paul never visited the place. Philip, the apostle, is said to have been crucified there. Philip's daughters were prophetesses.

The Colossian church was thought to be largely gentile. In fact, in Col 3:5-7, Paul gives a list of the church's sins – mostly aimed at gentiles. But the glory of the church slowly dissipated.

The local citizenry had to “believe” what they had been told about Jesus and the resurrection vs having first-hand knowledge. They could not have “known” personally about Jesus' resurrection, because they had not been there.

But they “knew” what they saw with the priests in Hierapolis emerging from the Gates of Hell because they were there to witness it. The whole situation was ripe for heresy to form.

Gates of Hell - [Then]



from The Daily Telegraph

[Now]



Heresies in Colossae:

Heresy # 1: Questioning the Adequacy and Supremacy of Christ. In addressing this heresy, Paul wrote in Col 1:15, 19 that Christ is the image of the invisible God. In 2:9, he wrote that in Christ dwells the fulness of the godhead and in bodily form. By him were all things created, 1:16, and cohere 1:17.

Paul continued: yet Christ was human. He did his redeeming work while in bodily flesh, 1:22. But these people contended that the simplicities of the gospel were incapable of successfully contending with the complexities of one's life.

So, the Colossian people retreated to the elemental spirits of this world, the stars and the planets. The conclusion of such a retreat was that life was fatalistic; man's fate is controlled, they said, by the position of the stars and planets; man had no control over his own fate. Since Christ was human, he could do little for them.

This belief system festered until 321 A.D.. when Emperor Constantine of Rome challenged Arius (a loud-mouthed North African priest) aching for a fight.

Rome called a council in Nicaea to debate the issue and settle the matter of Jesus's divinity and supremacy (cf. A Modest Proposal).

Heresy # 2: Gnosticism: that spirit alone was good and matter was all essentially evil. The universe was eternal and was not created from nothing but from flawed matter.

This heresy leads to these inevitable conclusions:

- 1) God could not be the creator of the world.
- 2) God must have created a series of emanations each more distant than the other from himself.

- 3) The end emanation, being farthest distant from God, finally could deal with the issue of evil matter.
- 4) The end emanation had become hostile to God.
- 5) Paul, addressed the “end emanation” argument: that God was indeed not some ignorant and hostile power; that his son perfectly knew and loved the Father, i.e., Jesus was **not** a “distant emanation” from God.

This heresy had a massive effect on doctrine. If matter was evil, and if Jesus was the Son of God, then Jesus could not have had a flesh and blood body.

Jesus must have had a spirit-body (phantom). So, when Jesus walked, he must have left no footprints.

Jesus could not be the savior of man because man was matter, and Jesus was spirit.

Paul insisted that Jesus saved man while in a fleshly body.

This heresy had an effect on man’s ethical approach to life. If matter was evil, then our bodies must be evil as well.

If our bodies are evil, we must either: starve and beat our bodies refusing our bodies’ desires; or, it would not matter what one did with the body – it being evil and all. The spirit was all that mattered.

So, they argued, one should practice asceticism with its’ many laws and restrictions on behavior in an effort to control the body’s evil nature.

Epilogue to Heresy # 2:

Gnosticism was a highly intellectual way to think and live.

Man must fight his way up a long ladder to get to God.

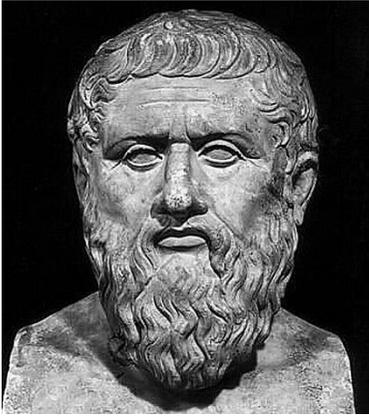
To do that, man must possess various kinds of secret knowledge with hidden passwords.

He would need to know “the rules.”

So, the higher reaches of religion were only available to the highly intellectual and/or the religious aristocracy.

Plato's Allegory of the Cave

Plato



(Getty Images)

Note: Biblical exegesis means to read truth out from a scripture. The use of Eisegesis means to start outside of scripture and conclude inside scripture. This lesson starts outside of scripture and makes an application related to scripture.

Socrates, the master teacher, would stand on the street corners of ancient Athens Greece and ask questions of persons passing by.

He was accused of not knowing the meaning, for example, of justice – because he kept asking questions of his students without readily providing answers.

One person who kept coming back to him was a man named Plato.

Plato: Born 427 B.C., and died in 347 B.C. at the age of 80. He wanted to enter politics but was disgusted with both dominant political parties. Both parties were then embroiled in the Peloponnesian Wars between Sparta and Athens.

Eventually, Plato chose to open an Academy of Philosophy that lasted for 1000 years – far beyond his own lifetime. Incidentally, his best student influenced by that academy was a man named Aristotle.

Plato spent his life teaching philosophy, thinking that politicians should at least try to seek and understand philosophical truth.

In that quest, Plato wrote a series of books. One, *The Republic*, contained a philosophical argument for an ideal government (NOT ideal faith).

Believing that mankind does not know how to govern himself, and believing an ideal government must be made up of officials committed to truth and fairness, he sensed a problem. To explain the problem, he created in *The Republic*, an allegory that has come to be called, *The Allegory of the Cave*.

The Theory of Forms: The basis of this allegory is a philosophical theory he called *The Theory of Forms*.

Being quite abstract, the *Theory of Forms* argues that the things we see or talk about are only “representations” (shadows) of that thing’s pure form.

Incidentally, quantum physicists in the early 21st century are beginning to think that what we see is not real but is only a hologram; that reality is in another dimension. (Plato might have been onto something. . .)

For example, a child wears a t-shirt on which appears the phrase, *Happiness is a puppy*. The puppy is a physical appearance, but in order

for that phrase to have been used, Plato would have said happiness, in its' pure form must exist somewhere.

In the church world, we baptize someone and say . . . *buried with Christ* . . . *raised with Christ to eternal life*. We are not actually burying that person. The symbolic act "represents" our declared union with the divine. But it assumes that *the divine* exists somewhere.

The Allegory: Based on the Theory of Forms, this allegory, one must remember, does not include any living individual. **It discusses only representations, categories (types) of people.**

The allegory begins in a cave where these representations of people are chained together facing the cave's walls and with their backs to a burning fire.

The chains symbolize the ignorance of all humanity; the fire represents a level of truth available to humanity.

Plato assumed mankind always seeks truth. But humanity each and all are only looking at dancing shadows on the wall before them caused by the reflection of the fire behind them and thinking the shadows are truth. Their ignorance keeps them from knowing the fire is causing the shadows.

Some depictions of the scene show a small wall between the people and the fire where marionette players, those who control a cultures' political/economic/spiritual information are displaying puppets. These puppets add to the flickering shadows caused by the fire.

The individuals now see shadows of themselves and of the puppets thinking they are all quite real. This is the “reality”, says Plato, of humanity.

Plato argued that these allegorical figures go to school, and then write books. They engage in debates in the market place of ideas. They hold conferences, present great economic, theological, philosophical, treatises based on these “realities” not knowing they are but shadows of truth.

Seeing the Light: In Plato’s allegory, one allegorical characterization turns, sees the burning fire behind him, and mentally connects the fire as the cause of the shadows on the cave’s wall.

The immediate sensation is that the fire causes his eyes to experience a burning sensation. But his chains (of ignorance) fall off. The truism is that *he saw the light*.

The characterization turns to his fellow participants in the allegory excitedly trying to convince them simply to turn and see what he has seen; that now they see only shadows, not reality. They not only refuse, they punish him for his heretical interruption.

Plato wrote in *The Republic*:

Those who are able to see beyond the shadows and lies of their culture will never be understood, let alone believed by the masses. . . We can really forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.

In history, those types of individuals have been fired from their jobs, burned at the stake, and in other ways punished for daring to “see the light.” The fellow members of the society continue looking at shadows, holding conferences, writing books, giving speeches about what they see projected on the wall.

There's A Way Out: Having been released from his chains of ignorance, the allegorical man, while surveying the cave, finds a stairway leading up and out. Discovery, now a part of his mind-set, he quickly ascends the steps and finds himself immediately in open brilliant sunlight.

The pain caused by the brilliance of the sun burns his eyes even more than before. In the allegory, the sun **DOES NOT represent man's spiritual salvation!** Instead it represents (and Plato would likely disagree) man's discovery that God is the source of ultimate truth.

Having a relationship with God is different from coming to understand academically that the source of all knowledge, of ultimate truth, is God.

Modern preachers often say from the pulpit, *why not step out into the sunlight of God's love*, having no idea of their comment's source.

Can't Stay Here. You've Got To Go Back To The Cave:

Having discovered God, the author of ultimate truth represented by the sun, this allegorical individual discovers that he now has a task. He must return to the cave. It is a natural God-given task to go back and warn the others of their folly.

There is no point in possessing knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself. Knowledge is to be shared. Otherwise, such an individual will find himself “sitting there smiling that he knows things the others do not know.” Such a response would represent the height of arrogance.

This Author's Analysis: The apostle Paul was schooled by Gamaliel in how to be a good pharisee. Paul appears to have been a model student. But Gamaliel was a learned man who quite likely had studied Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The writings of those three men had been available for three or four hundred years.

No one knows whether Paul had studied Plato, but Paul's education through Gamaliel quite likely included an exposure to Plato's philosophy.

No one can know whether Paul's comments, for example, to Colossae or Corinth reflect Plato's concept, but two of them are intriguing.

Consider Colossians 2:16-17: *Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink or with regard to a religious festival New Moon celebration or a Sabbath Day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality however is found in Christ.*

Or I Cor 13:12: *Now we see as through a glass darkly. But then face to face.*

Consider Moses in Exodus 33:20-23: Sunlight may represent heaven to us implying that mankind cannot look at pure truth.

God had told Moses he would not allow Moses to see his face.

Said God: (NIV) *“You may not see my face, for no one can see me and live.” Then the Lord said “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen”.*

Consider Luke, a physician, 1:78-79: . . . *because of the tender mercy of our God by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the path of peace.*

Finally, Heb 8:4-5: *If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.* (The New Covenant Bible)

THE LAST SUPPER

Based on Barclay Commentary & Narrated Bible

Jesus had already entered Jerusalem riding on the donkey as people laid palm fronds on the ground on which the animal could walk (Matt 21:1).

It was the last week Jesus would spend on this earth, and the wheels of betrayal at the hands of Judas were beginning to turn.

Jesus spent his nights in Bethany. During the days, he had cause to curse the fig tree and find it withered the next day; he wept over Jerusalem (Matt 21:12); cleansed the Temple for the second time in his ministry; pronounced woes on his enemies. But, Judas started to bargain with the Sanhedrin for the betrayal.

Jesus asked Peter and John to prepare the Passover Feast (Lk 22:1; KJV). They were led to the home of Mary, mother of Mark. There they prayed: *blessed art thou Jehovah, our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by thy commandments, and commanded us to remove the leaven.* Then, they made a ceremonial search of the house.

The search ended, they prayed again: *All leaven that is in my possession that which I have seen and that which I have not seen, be it null, be it accounted as the dust of the earth.*

They, then took the Paschal Lamb to the Temple for sacrifice; returned to roast the lamb on a spit. As it was being roasted, they prepared a low table (some think it was a covered area of the floor) and 13 couches or pillows for the celebrants.

The Table: On the table would have been three circles of unleavened bread plus one bowl of salt water with 13 sprigs of parsley beside it. There would have been four cups of wine, mixed: three parts wine to two parts water.

There would have been a bowl of Sop (*Charosheth*) (a mixture of apples, pomegranates, and nuts – with sticks of cinnamon protruding from it.) Finally, there would have been at least 13 sprigs of bitter herbs (e.g., horseradish).

The Table at the Last Supper



Fresco by Livia Agrest

The Feast Began: They would each have washed their hands ceremonially. The four cups of ceremonial wine were shared during the meal.

Wine Cup #1: *Cup of Sanctification (Kiddush):* was a thanksgiving for the fruit of the vine. It was a reminder of the first promise made to them by God himself, Ex 6:6-7, *I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*

Wine Cup # 2: *Cup of Wrath (Maggid):* After reciting the 10 plagues, the wine would have been sprinkled on the table.

Wine Cup # 3: *Cup of Blessing (Birkat Hamazon):* This cup was consumed after the main portion of the meal; “the cup that over-flows.”

Wine Cup # 4: *Cup of Praise (The Great Hallel, Psalm 136):* A reminder of Exodus 6:7, *I will take you to me for a people and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.*

The chanting of the last Hallel Hymns would mark the end of the Passover Meal and become the last hymn they would ever recite together.

The disciples did not recognize the significance of this meal; of Wine Cup # 4 with the final hymns – but Jesus DID!

Give thanks to the God of Gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of Lords. His love endures forever.

Through the Meal: During the meal, each one would have dipped a piece of parsley into the bowl of salt water and ate it symbolizing the hyssop in Egypt dipped in the Blood of the Lamb and spread on the lintels of their door posts.

Jesus probably prayed, (KJV) *Blessed be thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who bringest forth from the earth.* (or) *Blessed art thou, our Father in heaven, who givest us today the bread necessary for us.*

The middle circle of unleavened bread would have been broken by Jesus as again he prayed: *This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whosoever is hungry, let him come and eat. Whosoever is in need let him come and keep the Passover with us.*

Two short prayers were prayed: *All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord our God. And thy saints, the righteous, who do thy good pleasure, and all thy people, the house of Israel, with joyous song, let them praise and bless and magnify and glorify and exalt and reverence and sanctify and scribe the Kingdom to thy name, for from everlasting unto everlasting thou art God.*

The breath of all that lives shall praise thy name, O Lord, our God. And the spirit of all flesh shall continually glorify and exalt thy memorial, O God our King. For from everlasting unto everlasting thou art God, and beside thee we have no king redeemer or savior.

Jesus Made a Comment to Judas: As the meal progressed, Jesus addressed the group but in reference to Judas.

(Matt 26:23-21; NIV) *And while they were eating, he said "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "surely not I Lord?"*

Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

That done, Jesus shared with his disciples what modern Christians share as the Eucharist, i.e., *"Take and eat this is my body" . . . "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. . ."*

Post Script: Jesus and his disciples departed the Upper Room. Most went their own way, but Peter, James, and John went with Jesus.

Jesus prayed the High Priestly Prayer as he walked with them down across the Kidron Valley and up toward Gethsemane.

As they walked, Jesus' spirit became so burdened he asked them to wait as he went a bit farther and fell in prayer.

Jesus in Gethsemane



by Giulio Carlini - 1887

It was night. In the distance, one could see the faint glow of an approaching procession. There were torches held high. It was the High Priest, Malchus, his servant, and others in the entourage – and Judas!

Approach of the High Priest, His Entourage, and JUDAS!



The Taking of Christ painting by Caravaggio

islam

Definitions:

Islam: The religious faith of the Muslims.

Sects of Islam:

Shi'ite (fairly moderate in belief) popular in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, et. al.

Kurds: have wanted their own nation for many years. Fierce warriors. They live in northern Iraq and Turkey.

Wahabi: More violent in application of their beliefs. Osama Bin Laden and the House of Saudi in Arabia were/are Wahabi.

Sunni: These account for 90% of all Muslims.

Sulfi: A more mystical sect of Islam.

Muslim: An adherent to the religion of Islam and/or someone who has submitted (surrendered) totally to Allah.

Allah: Meant to be the same God as that of Christians – an issue of no small concern to Christians.

Arab: A member of the Semitic people living in the Arabian Peninsula.

Islam, In The Beginning . . .

Muhammad, the father of modern Islam, was born circa 570 A.D. His father died at about the time Muhammad was born and his mother died when Muhammad was about six years old.

For a while, his grandfather cared for him. Apparently during this period of time, Muhammad traveled with his uncle, then head of the prominent Hashim Clan in Mecca of Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea.

His uncle seems to have traveled with a camel caravan on a thriving trade route between Saudi Arabia and India. The route was probably called the King's Highway, winding its way up the eastern side of the Jordan River past the Dead Sea and Sea of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee). It would have stopped off at Capernaum and other cities for lay-overs (as did caravans traveling the Via Maris Highway originating in Egypt and following the Mediterranean coastline with a stop over at Capernaum on its way toward Rome).

During his time in and around Capernaum, Muhammad must have learned about the tenets of flourishing Christianity (then, nearly 600 years old) and of Monotheism (one God).

Because he probably learned of Christianity from traders instead of theologians, he never came to understand the vicissitudes of orthodoxies. Even so, some details of his doctrines are somewhat similar to the tenets of Christianity.

Muhammad married a forty year old widow, named Khadijah, when he was twenty five. He had gravitated from a belief in polytheistic gods toward belief in monotheism (one god) while traveling with his uncle. His new wife affirmed his belief in one god.

Discovering Islam: At age forty, Muhammed ventured into the hills somewhere around Mecca where he had his first experience with Islam. There, Gabriel supposedly appeared to him telling him he was god's chosen messenger. He hurried home, told Khadijah the good news about the experience, and immediately converted her to Islam.

In that mystical experience in 620 A.D., he claimed to have been transported 1000 miles to Jerusalem where he conferred with Jesus, Moses, and Abraham (remember that Jesus had ascended back to Heaven, circa 37 A.D., and both Moses and Abraham dated back to circa 3500 – 1400 B.C.). He was then taken by ladder to the 7th Heaven from the Dome of the Rock. What if anything happened there is unknown.

Remember that The Dome of the Rock is where Abraham nearly offered Isaac as a sacrifice; but Muhammad claimed it was instead, Ishmael that Abraham nearly offered as a sacrifice.

He began preaching the "revealed truth" he attributed to Gabriel. But Meccans rejected Muhammad's message and persecuted him for it. In 622 and fearing for his life, he fled 250 miles north to Medina. There, he started the Muslim calendar.

Muhammed gathered military forces with which he battled the Meccans for eight years. By 630, he took Mecca by force. There, he formed an Islamic society where he enthroned himself as Head of State, Diplomat, Military Commander and Legislator.

He immediately launched an offensive against Syria the outcome of which is unclear. He made a final pilgrimage to Mecca in 632 following which he returned to Medina where in that same year he died.

Muhammed had no sons. Two of his successors were assassinated.

Principles of Islam:

1. Allah is all powerful.
2. Allah is all knowing (omniscient).
3. Allah created the universe.
4. All Muslims (but not Christians) are equal before Allah.
5. To become a Muslim, one must simply declare Islam to be one's faith. No confirmation.

Five Foundational Ritualistic beliefs of Islam.

1. Muslims must confess their faith DAILY, i.e., to declare that *there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet*. This is repeated in daily prayers.
2. *Salat*: They must pray FIVE times each day (a. before sunrise, b. at noon, c. mid-afternoon, d. after sunset, e. before midnight).
3. *They must fast and refrain from engaging in sex from sun-up to sundown during the month of Ramadan (Saum)*.

4. They must pay an alms tax (*Zakat*) equal to 2% of their net worth. This tax is not strictly enforced.
 - a. The tax is levied annually and pocketed though it is intended for the poor.
 - b. It is levied on livestock, crops, precious metals, cash, and all who live in the household.
5. They must make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca in their lifetime.

Note: In some Muslim countries failure to observe these five beliefs is punishable by death. They must express belief in the Koran, Angels, and the Last Day.

Supportive beliefs of the Islamic faith:

1. At the level of doctrine, the 10 Commandments and the Koran are the same teaching.
2. Both Moses and Jesus were prophets.
3. Jesus was a Muslim; Jesus was born of a virgin, but was NOT resurrected.
4. Both Judaism and Christianity were messages given by God but Christians have distorted the message i.e.:
 - a. Muslim's mission is to remove the distortion so that THE WORLD OF ALL NATION-STATES WILL BECOME MUSLIM.
 - b. Correction # 1: Jesus was a prophet, NOT the Son of God.
 - c. Correction # 2: Jesus distorted God's message when He introduced a code of behavior that stressed spirituality over ritual law. Freedom is a myth (say some Muslims).

- d. Correction # 3: There is no such thing as ORIGINAL SIN. Adam and Eve were privileged as messengers; repented, and became regents entrusted to care for the earth just as we are.
- e. Muhammad's code supplants Judeo-Christian teaching. Islamic code properly addresses the human condition as it (presumably the human condition) evolves.
- f. Creation is the realization of Allah's will in history. Humans were created to worship God. Prophets are Allah's act of mercy to us to ensure that we DO worship Allah.
- g. Angels were created from light; are immortal; are a link between God and humanity.
- h. Gabriel, an angel, gave Allah's message to Muhammad.
- i. Satan, a former angel, gave Allah's message to Muhammad.
- j. Satan, a former angel, is the only one who can disobey Allah. He refused to be subservient to humans, as other angels are, so he was condemned to forever try to lead humans astray. Humans have a knowledge angels cannot acquire.
- k. Allah will never leave nor forsake his children.
- l. They're not sure if people can see or hear Allah. Doubters argue that it would make Allah human-like if people could see and hear him.
- m. Free Will vs. Predestination: If man does evil it's because Allah created the evil, (OR) how can Allah punish sinners when Allah created the sin? Some don't believe people should be free to make their own decisions.
- n. Allah is just and will hold man accountable for his actions.

- o. There is one Allah, angels, Paradise, Hell, and a Day of Judgment.
- p. They say the Koran is a continuation of Old Testament themes.
- q. Correction # 4: Jesus was not God incarnate but a prophet.
- r. Correction: # 6: Allah protects his prophets from torture and humiliation. Therefore, Jesus was NOT crucified. Allah lifted Jesus to heaven and replaced him on the cross with someone who looked like him.

So, What Have They Done Lately?

In the Dark Ages, as in 911 A.D., Islam struck first in a war that forced the west to respond. Muslims had started the war, and they won it.

Seventh century Jerusalem was surprised by a Muslim invasion. It was 614 A.D. Even though Christian emperor Heraclius reclaimed it in 630, Muslims again quickly defeated him and chased him out.

Muslims overran much of the Byzantine Empire. By 711 A.D. they controlled all of North Africa.

Jebel al-Tariq, a Muslim commander stepped onto a huge rock in southern Spain, another place where Muslims had secured major influence, and declared the rock should be named for himself, Jebel al-Tariq. Over time, the name became corrupted into the name *Gibraltar* that we recognize today.

Muslims bypassed the Spaniards, who had retreated into the mountains, and crossed the Pyrenes into France. The French stopped them in the Battle of Tours. So the Muslims turned to invade Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica in the 9th Century.

They attacked the outskirts of Rome in 846 A.D. Rome had become the center of western Christianity. That was equal in significance to Christians attacking Mecca, something that has never happened.

By 950-960, Byzantines counterattacked them, recovered Crete, Cyprus and parts of Asia Minor and Syria.

Hakim, an insane Muslim ruler persecuted Christians and ordered the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Christian population there had begun to shrink. Hakim was soon deposed, but the relational damage between Muslims, Jews and Christians had been done.

In 1071, Byzantine Emperor, Romanus Diogenes confronted a harsh Seljuk Turkish Muslim. But the Byzantines were utterly defeated. They had asked for help from Pope Gregory VII but were refused. They asked for help from Pope Urban II for help and got it in 1091.

Meantime, Seljuk Turks drove Christian priests out of the Holy Land which set the stage for the crusades.

The First Crusade was to take back Jerusalem, a battle that ended in a bloody massacre of Jerusalem's inhabitants. They won and controlled the Holy Land until 1291.

In 1291, Muslims took back Jerusalem. Other crusades tried but failed to win back the Holy Land from the Muslims.

The 14th Century Muslims had taken Serbia, Hungary, Albania and Bulgaria. There, Orthodox priests were celebrating mass in the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom (now called the Hagia Sophia) when Muslims broke in and took it over. They made it a mosque.

For the next 200 years, Islamic power declined because they had neither naval technology nor land based trade. They only understood anger and war.

In 1683 the Ottoman Turks launched their last attack on Europe laying siege to Vienna. Polish forces led by Jan Sabieski caught the Turks by surprise and halted the siege of the city.

There the Polish forces found the Turks had left Croissants and coffee on their tables, the surprise was such. So, the Polish folk introduced the croissants and coffee to western tables.

Muslims never made another serious attempt in Europe. They slipped into slow decline and only in the early 21st Century are re-emerging. But they still have no national product for sale except for oil. They still understand only anger and war.

Conclusion: The Muslims still remember these battles as *Acts of Rape* even though they are the ones who started them.

Major western leaders tend to apologize for the atrocities of the crusades, but the Muslims have never offered an apology for their atrocities.

|

Bits and Pieces

Some scriptures seem difficult to understand. Many who have not searched for their meanings have accepted incomplete or even mistaken explanations for them.

What follows are three separate topics each with its' own explanation.

Is God Really Selfish?

Matthew 5:16 (NIV) . . .*let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

At first glance, it seems God is selfish wanting you to do all of the work and let him take all of the credit. But that is not the case.

It is helpful to have some knowledge of dramatic theory in order to understand this scripture.

It is possible, but very difficult for an actor to be alone on a stage. He needs a character-foil, another actor to whom he can make comments. In doing so, the audience learns something from the main actor. But the audience learns much more when the character-foil responds to him.

The people of this world may believe there is a God. But they cannot see, hear, or touch God. They have you. You are the character-foil for God in this world. They observe you respond to God, and they form an opinion about what God is like.

Question: What is the opinion others form about God by watching you respond to him?

Finding Rest in God

Cities in first-century Israel had no city-planning. Their streets were narrow, curved, and many of them were unpaved. Making the issue more tenuous, sometimes the streets were made in a concave configuration with a ditch in the street's center.

As a result, large animals were not permitted in the city. Were that to have happened, horses, mules and camels would break a leg in the ditches. The result would be chaos.

In result, camel and donkey caravans were stopped at some city gates to unload any cargo. A draying service used by customers consisting of servants and slaves would be fitted with a pole (called a yoke) across their shoulders.

They would then be loaded with products which they would carry into the city – drop their load – and return for another load.

Some unscrupulous masters would overload the slave or servant in an attempt to save money or time. The individual servant or slave sometimes fell from weariness or from too-heavy a load. A fallen servant or slave might be beaten for having fallen.

Jesus probably understood this cultural problem when he said Matthew 11:29-30): *Come unto ME all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take MY yoke upon you and learn of ME, for I am gentle*

and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For MY YOKE is easy and MY burden is light (caps added).

He's Coming Back!

(Luke 16:20) (NIV) (John 20:7) Two circumstances presented in these two scriptures seem unrelated, but they are related. Jesus knew his own culture!

Dives (Luke 16:20) lived in luxury every day. Consider only a meal. He would have invited guests to share his meal because he obviously wanted to display his wealth.

Reclining at a table perhaps 4 inches above the floor, they would have been served one course of the meal at a time. The servant, having placed e.g., a roasted lamb on the table, would have torn off a piece of meat for Dives and each of his guests.

They would have eaten with bare hands, there being neither knife, fork nor spoon in use then. Eventually, grease would be running down each person's arm to the elbow. Each one would reach for a chunk of bread and wipe it up and down each arm to absorb the grease. Crumbs would fall onto the table.

Servants, having stayed just out of sight and peeking around a corner to determine when they might be needed again, would come and brush the crumbs from the table. Those were the crumbs desired by Lazarus.

Lazarus was dying. There were few or no hospitals. Families felt no conscience about placing a dying family member out on the street to beg

for themselves. Lazarus may have been “placed” at the compound-gate of Dives indicating, if so, a possibly caring family.

Lazarus, in the biblical episode, died and went to heaven while Dives lost his soul. Dives did not lose his soul because he was rich. He lost his soul because of what he did with his wealth.

Principle: *The accumulation of wealth AT THE EXPENSE OF the poor is morally wrong.*

Dives, would fold his napkin and place it beside his plate if he arose to go to the restroom or to get a drink, return, unfold his napkin and continue with the meal. When he was finished, he would wad the napkin and place it somewhere nearby. The servants understood the different protocols. A folded napkin told them he was not finished with the meal. He would return. A waded-up napkin meant he was finished.

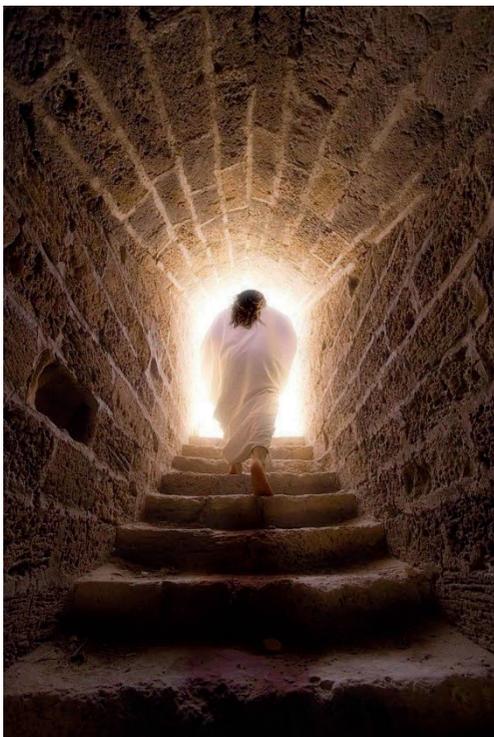
Change the scene to that of the resurrection (John 20:1-2). The ladies had already discovered Jesus was missing, and they thought his body had been stolen.

Peter and the other disciple came running to the tomb. The other disciple bypassed Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and peeked in but did not go in. Peter burst in and looked at the array of cloth.

What he saw was the linen burial cloth laying there having been waded up and discarded. But the cloth that had been around Jesus’ head had been neatly folded and placed in position where Jesus’ head had been.

The meaning: Jesus had discarded the burial linen as much as to say, *that represents death. I'm through with it – been there and done that! There is existence beyond the grave. Let that be evidence!*

But the folded cloth? Jesus' message with it was: *I'm through with death. But the folded cloth is to tell my servants, "Stay on duty. Stay alert, "I'M COMING BACK!"*



Getty images

A Study of Covenants

Prologue:

Covenants are an arrangement between two, not necessarily equal, parties. In every case, they involve some mutual obligation.

Early, biblical, covenants seem to have been used to regulate human behavior and to establish a measure of trust and predictability in social and political life.

A focused reading of biblical covenants indicates that one of their obligations on people was that people were to learn the nature of LAW as it related to both culture and religion. A spiritual understanding of law's intent should eventuate an understanding of GRACE. Its' success met mixed reviews depending on whether one viewed it from a Hebrew or Gentile perspective.

Adamic [and Eve] Covenant: This covenant placed an allegorical Adam [an early Hebrew name for mankind] and Eve in a perfect world called *Eden*. It seemed to have implied for mankind a covenant with their creator God.

This allegorical first human couple were charged with the obligation of caring for the perfect world they had been given.

Accordingly, God, keeping his obligation, would visit them daily in a continuing relationship. Both Adam and Eve, though we have no record

of their ever having been signatories to the covenant, broke their implied part. Also, interestingly, their breach came as a result of an allegorical theological debate with Satan

Any layman reviewing the covenant would recognize that the “deck was stacked” against them, i.e., two human beginners squaring off against Satan, a theologically seasoned con-man whose power supposedly had been near-equal to God himself.

Their “fall” in the garden forever affected mankind who has been singularly unable to re-establish the relationship with God. That weakness, in theology, is called Total Depravity.

Adam and Eve – cast out of Paradise



by Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

Noah's Covenant: (Gen. 6:18) This covenant represents the first formal attempt to form a covenant with the descendants of allegorical Adam and Eve.

This covenant is “different “in that it was an act of God’s GRACE given to one family, that of Noah. Remember, God was severing contact with the rest of mankind with a giant flood because of human faithlessness that had provoked God.

Noah’s receipt of the covenant was his obedience in building the Arc as God had commanded. In other words, Noah “signed” the covenant whereas Adam had not. Noah obeyed, but Adam had not obeyed.

Gen 20:22 records the fact that after the flood, Noah sacrificed to God, and God responded by expanding his Noah-based covenant to cover all mankind.

Again, the covenant was not agreed to by mankind, only by Noah, and then only for himself and his family. Mankind’s agreement would eventually be an individual one (i.e., Jesus Christ’s introduction of Individual Responsibility before God).

Meantime, mankind would have to live through a lengthy period of sacrificial/temple/synagogue worship protocols.



Noah's Ark [built by Johan Huibers a Dutch building contractor]

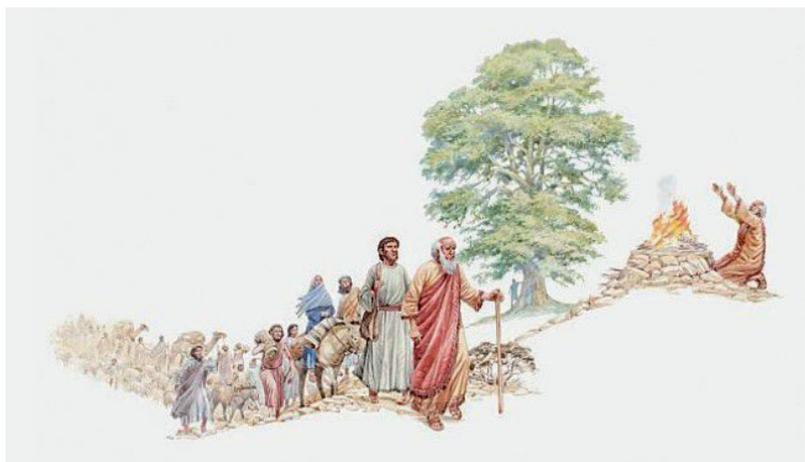
God's expanded covenant included a promise never to destroy mankind again with water (he didn't mention other means of destruction). The sign was a rainbow. So, mankind could live for a time in God's world supposedly to seek a deeper relationship with the creator-God.

Justice seems to be at issue with the Noah Covenant. Righteousness, the flip side of Justice, would have to wait for the next covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant.

Abrahamic Covenant: Abraham was seventy- five years old when God asked him to leave Haran for a destination . . . to be continued. He did not know where he was going – blind trust.

God made an unparalleled promised to Abram in NIV's Gen. 12:2, *I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and*

whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.



Getty images

This covenant was formalized, as recorded in Gen.15, and it became a profound religious experience. The ceremony went like this:

1. God opened the ceremony.
2. Abram immediately raised an objection, i.e., How could he (Abram) experience a major blessing if it was to come through a son. He did not have a son. Apparently, God either ignored or overruled the objection.
3. God asked Abram to bring to the ceremony:
 - a) a three-year-old heifer
 - b) a goat
 - c) a ram
 - d) a dove
 - e) a pigeon.

4. The ceremony was brief and uncomplicated:
 - a) Abram was to cut the heifer, goat and ram in half and separate the halves opposite each other.
 - b) The birds were left alone.
 - c) Birds of prey came down onto the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.
 - d) After sunset, a smoking pot with a flaming torch came down (don't know from where) and passed between the carcass halves.
5. Ceremony aftermath:
 - a) Abram's subsequent belief (?) introduced righteousness to the covenant concept.
 - b) *Abram believed the Lord, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6).*
 - c) This told Abram that both his and his descendants' faith were in the hands of God: *On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kunzites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girashites and Jebusites (who lived-in present-day Jerusalem).*

Abram and God were clearly unequal partners in the covenant, though great privilege was given Abram. Both partners assumed great responsibilities:

1. Abram became Abraham.
2. Abraham was to *Walk before me, and be blameless (Gen.17:1).*

3. God gave Abraham the Land of Canaan.
4. God committed himself to Abraham and his descendants in perpetuity.
5. Abraham and his household were to undergo circumcision.
6. Abraham's descendants were thereafter "A Chosen People (Gen12:3) *In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*
7. From this passage, i.e., (Gen. 12:3), some declare a "Doctrine of The Elect."
 - a) Adam: to cultivate the garden
 - b) Noah: to build an Arc
 - c) Abraham to leave his home and live blameless.

Note: This author can detect NO idea of "elect" in item # 7 above.

Sinai Covenant: (Ex: 19 & 20) This covenant, above others served as the foundation of the beliefs known as Judaism. It was established in the 13th century B.C. There is a similarity between this Deuteronomic (Sinaitic) Covenant and earlier treaties of the Hittites.

Hittite Treaties

- a) Preamble: *These are the words of the Great King.*
- b) Historical prologue: *The events leading up to the treaty . . .*
- c) General Stipulations: *The loyalty due to the suzerain.*
- d) Specific Stipulations: *Detailed law relating to obedience.*
- e) Divine Witnesses: *Called to witness the making of the treaty (Heaven and earth)*
- f) Curses and Blessings: *Contingent upon obedience or disobedience.*

Sinai Document

- a) Preamble: 1:1-6 *These are the words Moses spoke.*
- b) Historical Prologue: 1:7-4:49 *Events leading up to the covenant.*
- c) General Stipulations: 5:11 *The loyalty due to God.*
- d) Specific Stipulations: *The detailed Hebrew Law.*
- e) Divine Witnesses: 32 *The witness of Heaven and earth; 30:19; 32:1.*
- f) Curses and Blessings: 27:28 *Contingent upon obedience or disobedience.*

The Above included Specific Stipulations

10 Commandments:

- *Foundation of constitutional law
- *God became their “Head of State”
- *Breach of the law was a sin against God.
- *It established a new way of life for the Hebrews.

Detailed law covering events of daily life, e.g., Ex 21-23.

- *But they could not codify every facet of human behavior.
- *To accept the covenant was to accept a relationship with God.
- *Israel itself would break the covenant and slip back into slavery (Egyptian).

This covenant was renewable.

*With Joshua 8:30-34; 24:1-28

*With King Josiah 2 Kings 23:1-3 (just before Moses' death).

*Before every major military campaign.

*Deuteronomy tells of a covenant ceremony that included a clear statement of "covenant love." Clearly God loved his people. Jesus would, in time, call this the *great and first commandment*. (Matt 22:38)



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*Paul, Gal. 3, set this covenant aside saying it was superseded by the gospel. This, because the breach of O.T. law placed the person under a curse (Deut. 27:26).

With this covenant, God had set up Israel as a theocratic state with himself at its' head. Israel was to represent God to the world, Ex 19:6 *You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* But it appears Israel did not "get it."

Davidic (Messianic) Covenant

This covenant was made circa 1000 BC; a royal covenant with David, the King; made through Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 23:5). Initiated by God, it was to be everlasting.

When the nation divided into two kingdoms, David ruled Judah, the southern kingdom.

David's dynasty ended in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar overran Judah and Judeans were taken captive into Babylon.

Matthew 1:1 and Luke 3:31 point to Jesus, the messiah as a descendant of the Davidic Covenant thus extending the covenant concept into the New Testament.

Hosea (Hosea 3:1) saw Israel's breach of the covenant typified by Gomer, his wife having prostituted herself in a local temple. It appears that Hosea, walking around downtown one day saw temple prostitutes being sold at auction. Among those for sale was Gomer, his wife.

Hosea bid for her and bought her for a price. He took her home with him. Hosea, thus, prophetically saw a renewed “marriage” between Israel and God (Hos 2:14-18).

Nice try! But the old Davidic Covenant had been broken!

Jeremiah, between 7th and 6th centuries B.C., saw Israel defeated in battle; saw Israel lose independence and become a vassal of Babylon.

But, Jer. 31:31, foretold a new covenant, *the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.*

This covenant would be known as an act of God **within the hearts of man** (Jer.31:33); a massive spiritual transformation, a watershed in the evolution of the God/man relationship.

Jesus, at the Last Supper would say to his disciples, *this cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood.* (Luke 22:20)

The New (Testament) Covenant

The Old and New Covenants differed from each other. They differed in the way they were written: The old was written on tablets of stone; the new is being written on the spiritual hearts of believers.

Secondly, the New Covenant carries with it an enablement from God to keep the covenant (Rom. 8:2-4).

Thirdly, they differed in the way God could be “known.” God revealed himself in the Old Covenants through prophets, judges, etc. In the New

Covenant, God can be “known” by each believer as a spiritual heart-experience.



Fourthly, they differ in the way sin is treated. In the Old Testament, there was a yearly reminder of sin (Heb 10:3). In the New Covenant, there is no remembrance remaining of sin, *for by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified* (Heb. 10:14).

The Lord’s Supper is a celebration of Christ having sealed the covenant with his own blood. (2nd Cor. 3:6) *God has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant; (Jer. 31:31) not in a written code but in the spirit; (Jl. 2:28-32) for the written code kills, but the spirit gives life.*

Important: The New Covenant gives the believer direct access to God.

He is God, But What Shall We Call Him?

To Start With . . .

Characteristically, man does not go looking for God. God goes looking for man. Further, God seeks to reveal himself to man, and this revelation is neither immediate nor a complete revelation at one time.

God continues to reveal himself through nature, through historical events and through individual spiritual maturation.

One method of God's self-revelation has been through an evolving history of names. It appears that as man's social acumen evolved through time, so did the names used to define and understand God. It has been a **Progressive Revelation** progressively addressing the momentary needs and expectations of man.

But we do not now nor will we ever completely know, i.e., understand God – but we try. (I Cor. 13:12) . . . *Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.* With ever more names for him comes ever increasing knowledge of God and his ways.

Historically with each additional name used for God has come a change in man's relationship with God commensurate with the new name. Moreover, God seems to reveal ever more of himself to us at each new "fork-in-our-life's-road", i.e., each new spiritual intersection in our lives;

the same has been true with Israel. In the modern church, this increasing spiritual maturity is referred to as “growth in grace.”

Is He Still God if He has no Name?

Abram, back in Ur of the Chaldees (present day southern Iraq) became curious. His curiosity, (cf. *Abram: Is There a God?*) was presented to his father, Terra, who worshipped numerous gods (sun, moon, rain, fire, etc.) just to be sure he did not make a mistake.

Abram’s logic was this (according to Josephus): These gods display irregular patterns of behavior, but they do not change their pattern; perhaps they lack the power to change their pattern. So, they do not, cannot, do anything to help you, the worshipper. His logic further was similar to this:

The fire god is extinguished by the rain god; so, the rain god must be more powerful than the fire god. In turn, the rain god is stopped by the sun god. So, there must at least be a hierarchy of gods. Perhaps there is one “umbrella god” over them all.

Abram then, journeyed to Haran and from there to Egypt where Josephus indicates Abram – now Abraham, debated the issue with Egypt’s philosopher/theologians. Supposedly, he won the debate.

Four hundred years later, Moses, on Sinai was given ten commandments the very first of which was *Thou shalt have no other gods before me!* A further commandment read *Thou shalt not use the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

Great idea, not to use the name of God in vain, but what WAS his name? He had no name! The Israelites solved both the name and in-vain-use issues by creating one no one could pronounce, JHVH. Just try to pronounce that word! You cannot. Further, meaning in words is contained in vowels, and there are no vowels in the original name for God.

One might argue that a name no one can pronounce makes the commandment against using it in vain, a pointless one. Not so. The Israelites introduced a substitute name for JHVH, *Elohim*.

Elohim: This seems to be the first Old Testament word used for God, and it corresponds to *Theos* in Greek; *God* or *Deity* in English.

Israelites must have been anxious to refer to God using that term because Elohim appears over 2500 times in the Old Testament.

It was, in English, “a catch-all” word. It was used for pagan gods in Gen. 31:30 and Ex. 12:12. It also referred to a plurality of meaning implying a plenitude of power in reference to God’s governance both of the world and mankind.

Nehemiah said (9:6), *Thou, even thou art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee* (KJV).

Paraphrased, Nehemiah was saying: God used no preexisting material to fashion any of his creation. Nehemiah’s phrasing reads better.

God had been Elohim to Abram/Abraham and his seed forever. He was *Elohim* to Abraham again when he tithed to Melchizedek – also, he was *El Elyon* (a version of *Elohim*) “the Most High God.”

Another early Hebrew reference to God was to use either of two interchangeable terms, *Yahweh* or *Jehovah* (Gen 13:4).

Jehovah: This name was the most specific one to date for God and permitted man’s concept of God to be more detailed. It was put together using the four Hebrew consonants JHVH plus vowels that formed the word, *Adonai* (Lord).

Yahweh (*Jehovah*) reveals the most about God. It stresses:

- a) the absolute faithfulness of God;
- b) the continued nearness of God;
- c) the deliverance capability of God;
- d) the blessings of God;
- e) that God will do what he promises;
- f) that he would be gracious, merciful, patient, loving, kind, forgiving, just, righteous.

Jacob must have had this insight when he said, *I wait for thy salvation, O Yahweh* (Gen. 49:18, KJV).

A new phrase came into being: *Jehovah, Adonai, Master Lord*” (Gen 15:2). It indicated God and Abraham’s relationship would change to become Master/Slave based. Some believe an earlier pronunciation of *Jehovah* actually was *Yahweh*.

Note: Israelite reverence in pronouncing the name for God was so intense that scribes would, in coming to the name for God, choose a new quill, write the name, and break the quill so it could never be used again.

Jews, when needed, would say *Adonai*, sometimes, *Jehovah-Adonai*. Many believers in the 20th-21st centuries simply abbreviate the pronunciation to *Jehovah* alone.

The reasoning of some is this: that JHVH was used in reference to both revelation and God's special care for his covenant people. As such, *Jehovah* would become the redemptive name of God.

Jehovah-Jireh, "the Lord will provide," was used in reference to Gen 22:14 where Abraham was provided a substitute sacrifice for Isaac – providentially.

Accordingly, God was in a "bind" with his own son, Jesus. He could not offer a substitute for man's sin and still provide a substitute for his own son as he had done for Isaac. So, Jesus had to die.

When Israel fought Amalek, they learned the name, *Jehovah Nissi*, "The Lord, our Banner of Protection" (Ex. 17:15).

Gideon, there, learned of God as *Jehovah-Shalom*, *A God of Peace*.

(Ps. 23) *Yahweh-Roi; My Shepherd*, i.e., "The Lord is my shepherd" (KJV).

(Ex. 15:26) *Yahweh-Rapha; the healer*: God's assurance that the Israelites would not suffer the diseases of Egypt.

(Ex. 31:13) *Jehovah-Mekaddishkem; The Lord that sanctifies;* "Thou anointest my head. . ." (KJV).

(Jer. 23:5) *Jehoveh-Rsidkenu; The Lord our righteousness; He leadeth me in paths of righteousness. . . (KJV).*

El Shaddai, a completely new term, is used 30 times in Job alone; two times in Psalms; once each in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Ruth. In addition to other provisions of the God/Man relationship, this term presents God as the *Abba father* of the New Testament. He offers blessings, comfort, nourishment.

Ex. 6:2-3 said: *And God also said to Moses, "I am Yahweh (the Lord); I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shaddai (God Almighty), but my name, Yahweh (the Lord), I did not make myself known to them.*

Culturally, each family placed the term, *El Shaddai* inside a small hole near the bottom of a Mezuzah, a wooden-cylindrical item mounted on the door frame of each orthodox Jewish home. If someone would lean down and look inside the finger-sized hole, that person would see, *El Shaddai*, "Almighty God"!

Each person either entering or exiting that home was expected to kiss their finger, touch the hole, i.e., *Shaddai*, and recite a blessing. Two such blessings are in the Gentile bible:

May the thoughts of my heart and the words of my mouth and the deeds of my hands be pleasing in thy sight, Oh Lord.

And: *May the Lord preserve my going out and my coming in. (KJV)*

**A MODERN MEZUZZA: It's law binding on all
In the household. Contents in exactly 22 lines.**



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Inside that Mezuzah was written, in exactly 22 lines either folded or scrolled, these words from Deut. 6:4-9 and 11:13-21.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates . . .

So, if you faithfully obey the commands, I am giving you today – to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul – then I will

send rain on your land in its season both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you. Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth. (NIV)

Emmanuel - A Watershed: "God with us!" The bond and covenant,

here are quite personal. It should not be lost on the reader that with former names, God mostly allowed man to "discover" him. But with Emmanuel, he started with Isaiah approximately 715 years earlier getting man ready for the Christ.

With earlier names, it seems God did not deal with individual sin but with information and tribal authority. The concept of individual responsibility before God was new, a cultural, legal, historical watershed in man's development. Until this time, man had been tribal with tribal consequences for wrongdoing.

(Isaiah 7:14) *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (NIV).*

(Matt 1: 22-23) *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel – which means, God with us” (NIV).*

Earlier associations of man with God were from God’s perspective; i.e., to assure man of his presence, his shekinah. (Ex.13:21) God showed his presence with the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day.

In Isaiah the emphasis changed from *I with you* to *He with us*.

(Matt 18:2) *Wherever two or three are gathered together, he would be with them.*

(Matt. 28:20) Before his ascension, he told his disciples he would be with them to the end of the age.

(Jn. 14:17) *He who “. . .dwells with you . . . will be in you.”*

(Col. 1:27) *God with us indwelling us Christ in you the hope of Glory.*



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Limitations of Humanity

The Apostle Paul said, *Now, we see as through a glass darkly; then, face to face.* There is more to that statement than most folk recognize.

Limitations of Human Senses: Consider, first, the sense of hearing.

Human perception of sound begins at about 20 cycles-per-second at the lowest end of the continuum. It ends at approximately 20,000 cycles-per-second at the upper end. Twenty thousand cycles per second is approximately equal the squeal folk once heard from an old-style TV picture tube.

But, sounds occur both below 20 cps and above 20,000 cps, all outside human range; sounds some animals can hear but which are denied to human perception. In other words, we do not hear everything that is available to be heard.

A table saw produces sound at approximately 4,000 cycles per second. The human male voice range is approximately 134 cps to 146 cps. The female voice range is approximately 188 cps to 295 cps. While various studies give specifically different numbers, they are close to these.

Complicating this issue is the fact that age often robs individuals of some hearing acuity given them by nature.

Research has shown that new or difficult information causes individuals to switch attention from ear-to-ear more slowly creating a potential in

the switching process for losing some of the information available to be heard.

Still further complications: conversational speech occurs at about 120 to 140 words-per-minute. As speech is speeded, comprehension of meaning declines. At approximately 400 words per minute (some say 500), comprehension drops off to 50% or below.

The unfortunate result for hearing alone: upper and lower-end acuity limits rob us of sound; attention-switching speed from ear to ear potentially takes away more information; the speed of the speech can cause an even greater loss of information.

Limits of Sight: Visual acuity is not constant, changing moment by moment through-out any given day. As with hearing, we switch from eye-to-eye gathering visual information. This switching occurs at approximately 20 times per second.

More problematic, the speed of switching varies as a function both of the newness and complexity of the information being seen, weariness of the individual, light values, and more. For example, one may remember reading a page of philosophy and, at the end of the page being unable to comprehend what they have read. They return to read the page again.

Potentially, information is lost as the switching occurs. There's more; colors disappear from visual acuity as light fades. Red is the last color in the color spectrum to be lost. The colors are all still there; you just do not see them.

The size of the item being viewed affects visual acuity. We cannot even see a single human cell except through a microscope; yet we believe sub-atomic particles exist at the negative 30th root.

Limitations of Taste: With advanced age, the taste of many items diminishes. Further, we have decided to identify taste arbitrarily. For example: take one taste of sugar. The sensation is sweet. Keep tasting spoonful after spoonful. Eventually, the taste will become bitter. Which is the real taste, the first one or the final one?

Data Processing: The limited information received through any and all of human senses must find its' way to the human brain.

In service of this need, people form categories of meaning in the brain. The more one travels, reads, listens, tastes, etc., the more information is gathered into the brain and more categories are formed. These categories all have addresses identified by one or more of the senses, a time frame of its' collection, or the source of the information.

For example, one may smell the sweet aroma of new-mown hay and instantly recall any number of data categories from years gone by; of people one knew; of the latch on an old barn door; or of grandma's cooking.

The data being processed come from the 20 or so eye switches per second; from the frequent hearing switches ear to ear; from touch, taste or smell.

Processing is slowed when data is received for which the person has no corresponding meaning-category. In such a case, the individual has a choice either to discard the data or create a new mental category of meaning. Creating new categories takes time and effort to accomplish.

Misunderstandings occur when two persons use the same or similar terms but whose categories do not match. For example, an individual, being examined by a physician, was informed that he needed a colonoscopy, i.e., a camera's investigation of a colon's inside.

The patient had never heard the term, colonoscopy. But he HAD heard the term, colostomy, a surgical procedure where an orifice is created in the patient's side where the bowel can empty itself.

The patient instantly processed the new term, colonoscopy, into the patient's own previously formed category, colostomy. Misunderstanding occurred that required detailed explanation from the physician.

Information Overload: This concept comes in two forms:

Channel Overload: This occurs when the individual receives data from multiple receptors at the same time and likely related to different subjects. That is, the eyes see one thing; the ears hear another; touch sensation and smell sense still other phenomena.

Data Overload: This occurs when either too much information volume, new information, complex information or rapid information is received.

Often in cases such as Overload or mismatched categories of meaning the individual often becomes confused, responds inappropriately, or “shuts down.”

Simply put, more information is given than the individual can process in the time available.

Let's Look at Scripture:

There are sights, sounds, taste sensations, touch sensations, odor sensations that we cannot know. God made us that way. In fact, **we do not know what we do not know!**

I Cor. 13:12; *For now, we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known.* KJV

John 8:27 Jesus was explaining his relation with both the Father and with his disciples: *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. Then, they said unto him, "Who art thou?" And Jesus saith unto them, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him."* They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. KJV

Their mental concepts simply did not match those of Jesus'.

Consider these scriptures Matt 13:13; 14; 16:11; Luke 9:45; 18:34; John 10:6; 12:16.

Jesus spent 33 years on earth involved in much activity. Among all of his activity, he was experiencing what it is like to have the limitations of humanity.

Is it a possibility that in heaven the angels have been told what it was like to have been human?

Last of the Judges; Start of Kings

Prologue: over the next near 2000 years: Israel had invaded the Promised Land displacing some or all of the Jebusites (from current-day Jerusalem), Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites.

Egypt's Pharaoh, Merneptah had died circa 1216 (about the time of England's Magna Carta, marking the end of the Divine Rights of Kings)

Egypt had lost control of its' Asiatic Empire except for regaining some control under Ramses III (1175-1174). Assyria was rising in power at about 1250 but posed no threat to Canaan Land and its' new occupants.

Israel's main worry was restricted to the Canaanite City-States in the immediate area, mostly located between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River.

Raiding parties would come out of the Arabian Desert and elsewhere to attack Israel. They used horse-camel-warfare, an ancient version of blitzkrieg (lightening war).

So effective were these attacks that Israelites had to stop their farming at times to run and hide in mountain caves. Israel had only a minimally effective army and meager military equipment.



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Along Came the Judges: Israel's 12 tribes were very loosely organized emerging as a confederacy mostly so far as it involved a form of worship but with minimal social/federal/economic responsibilities. But there were annual religious festivals at Shiloh.

Judges became their first real attempt at self-governance, a system that lasted 410 years. Tribal leaders arose from time to time to deal with local problems only to be replaced by another emerging judge. The entire period of judges started with the death of Joshua and reached to Saul who would become their first King.

The closer time came to Samuel, considered the last of the Judges (he, a prophet-judge; a transition-judge) the more pressure was building on Israel to have a stronger central government.

The loose confederacy of 12 tribes was proving ineffective in that it could not interact as a collective force with the increasingly frequent raiding

parties, nor could it coordinate contradicting efforts of the various tribes. Something had to be done – and soon!

The period of the Judges, then, was about to end and be replaced with a period of Kings to serve a more central government. The two kingdoms had not yet divided north and south.

The turning point to end the period of Judges came with the BATTLE OF MEGIDDO in the Valley of Jezreel. Modern prophets say this is the same valley that will eventually become the scene of the BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON.

The Watershed Battle of Megiddo: This turning point battle came as Samuel, the transition-judge had anointed Saul (in secret) as a “prince” over the people. Saul could lead the fledgling “nation” as a collective force against the Ammonites and the Philistines.

The actual battle was triggered when the people of Jabesh-Gilead were being overwhelmed by the Ammonites in one more raiding-party battle. The people of Jabesh-Gilead asked the Ammonites for a treaty to end the siege. The Ammonite king sent a reply saying he would agree to end a siege *when the right eye of every Israelite was gouged out.*

Saul heard the ultimatum as he returned in the field behind some oxen. He took an ox, cut it into pieces and sent a piece each to an area of Israel with this message: every man should come to fight the Ammonites or this (what he had done to the ox) would happen to them as well (I Sam 11:7); the world’s first Army Universal Draft.

Field of Battle was Set: A mighty army, understandably, was assembled in the central hill country above the Jezreel Valley. The Canaanites (Amorites) were assembled on the plains that were part of the entire Valley of Jezreel.

The valley controlled the commercial route from Egypt to Mesopotamia via the Via Maris Highway. Obviously, the Canaanites controlled Israel's

Megiddo Valley Today



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economy so long as they controlled the Via Maris and the Fortress of Megiddo that guarded the pass into the valley (Judges 5:6).

Deborah, had been a charismatic leader and judge, with the military service of Barak, a general. Together, they used the forces of Saul's rag-tag army to meet the Canaanites.

The Canaanite general was a man named Sisera. Sisera had approximately 900 chariots with which to do battle – each chariot

equipped with a driver and at least one spear thrower and/or slinger (think of David's sling). No one knows how many soldiers he had.

God Comes to the Rescue! Deborah and General Barak stayed just over the hill and out of sight from the army of Sisera, now in the actual Valley of Jezreel. They waited – and waited – and waited.

It began to rain, and rain, and rain, and rain. It rained until the Kishon River there overflowed its' banks inundating the entire Valley of Jezreel including Sisera's army with its' 900 chariots, 1200-1800 mounted charioteers and 900 horses.

General Barak's rag-tag army attacked. The chariots were mired in the mud; horses were slipping and sliding. It was a turkey-shoot for Barak's army.

Sisera, seeing his battle lost, ran for his life Barak's men in hot pursuit. Running-slogging through the mud headlong up the valley, he saw ahead a lady, Jael, wife of Heber, a Kenite (who had developed friendly relations with Sisera in the past). She waved him into her tent to hide.

Sisera asked Jael to tell his pursuers he was not there. She complied. His pursuers continued on looking for him. Sisera, exhausted and feeling safe among friends, fell asleep on his side whereupon Jael, reaching for a nearby tent peg and hammer, proceeded to unceremoniously, drive it through Sisera's skull "nailing" him to the earth (Judges 4:18-21).

Israel saw this victory as Yahweh's power against human forces. They offered the King's crown to Saul, and the Tribal Confederacy of Judges was ended.

Jael – Sisera, Tent Peg and Hammer



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Miracles of Jesus

The Courtier's Son: The courtier was an official of Herod's royal court.

Jesus was in Cana of Galilee having returned from a trip south to Judea.

The courtier's family lived in Capernaum nearly twenty miles from Cana.

By horse, a day's ride. It is uncertain why Jesus had returned to Cana.

There is significant symbolism in the meeting between Jesus and the courtier.

- 1) An official of the Royal Court was seeking help from the Carpenter from Nazareth.
- 2) It can be assumed that a small crowd gathered around the meeting. It was common.
- 3) The courtier, in effect, was surrendering his own authority to that of Jesus.
- 4) The conversational exchange itself revealed something of Jesus:
Courtier: asked Jesus to go to Capernaum to heal his son.
Jesus: *Unless you see signs and wonders you will never believe.*
Courtier: *Sir, come down before my little lad dies.*
Jesus: *Go your way, your son lives!*

Jesus did not even see the lad. That is some "sign and wonder." Both Jesus and the Courtier knew Herod would never accept the Courtier's new-found faith; that he would be mocked by both court and friends.

Jairus' Daughter: (Matt. 9:18, 19, 23-26 & Mark 5:51-43) Jairus was the Ruler of the local Synagogue in Capernaum. He did not either preach or teach; he controlled the external order of worship, i.e., he decided who would speak, when; who would sit and where; he was a strict “by-the-book” type – thoroughly orthodox. He might have been expected to view Jesus as a heretic.

Peter’s home was barely a stone’s throw from the Capernaum Synagogue, both having a fabulous view of the Mediterranean. Further, it is quite likely that Jesus had taught in the synagogue; that Zebedee, his

Capernaum Synagogue

[where Jesus and his disciples were thought to have worshipped.]



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wife, Salome (sister to Jesus' mother) plus James and John, children of Zebedee and Salome, all had attended the synagogue. These people knew each other! Jairus came to Jesus, not the other way around.

The scene in Jairus' home was pandemonium; a Jewish family engaged in official mourning. There had been a death in the home!

Jewish Grieving Protocols (3):

1) Rending of Garments:

- a. There were 39 different rules to follow.
- b. They were all followed while standing.
- c. Women tore their garments in private and then had to wear the torn garment backwards.
- d. Each garment must be torn in the area of the heart so as to show skin.
- e. In the case of a father or mother, the rending must specifically show the heart area.
- f. The tear must be large enough to accommodate one's fist.
- g. The hole must remain open for 7 days, then be stitched back together – loosely.

2) Wailing for the Dead:

- a. Professional wailers would be hired from among local women to accomplish this protocol.
- b. These women lived locally and studied local families so they could name names and circumstances in their wailing, i.e.,

push folk's "hot buttons" so as to increase the family's sense of grief.

3) Flute Players:

- a. A minimum of 2 flute players would be expected to work at the same time as the wailing women.
- b. A wealthy family (such as that of Jairus) might hire many more flute players and wailing women so as to make the greater show of grief.

Into THIS cacophony atmosphere entered Jesus. At this juncture, references disagree with each other. One source says Jesus quietly told them the girl was not dead but only asleep (as in a coma).

Note the absurdity such a statement would have laid on the professional wailing women and the many flute players.

In fairness, two additional sources imply that the girl was indeed dead; that Jesus raised her from the dead!

In the case of death, the deceased would be buried by sundown the same day. If death occurred after sundown, burial would occur that same night. In the case of a coma, it was not uncommon that persons in a coma were buried alive.

Healing of the Leper: (Mark 1:40-45) This miracle was both simple and fast. The leper, a man with no name given, came and knelt in front of Jesus.

The leper said, *if you are willing to do so, you are able to heal me.* Jesus was moved to the depths of his being by this simple request.

Why was Jesus so moved? The leper is thought to have suffered from Nodular-Anesthetic leprosy. It begins with lethargy and joint pain followed by discolored patches on the back with small nodules.

Anesthetic Leprosy



Getty Images

The skin thickens with more nodules gathering in the folds of the cheek, nose, lips, and forehead.

The nodules grow so large and numerous the face becomes disfigured so as to resemble a lion or other animal. The nodules break, ulcerate and open giving off a foul discharge and odor.

Nerve trunks become affected so that the victim can scald himself and not feel it. Muscles atrophy so that the hands and fingers appear as claws. Eyebrows fall off leaving a staring appearance. Nodules on the vocal folds give the voice a harsh sound.

Churches, then and even in the medieval period would cut slits in the church walls to allow such victims to remain outside and peek in to the service.

Jesus' response; *I am willing. Be cleansed.* Jesus gave the man a warning not to tell anyone. It did not work! The man went straight to the local priest with his required and appropriate offering for cleansing. Such an act would prove to the church that he had been healed. In fact, the healed leper went everywhere telling people what had happened.

Man at the Pool of Bethesda: (John 5:1-15) Jesus was likely alone having come to Jerusalem for a feast. There were three feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. All Jewish males within 15 miles of Jerusalem were required by law to attend.

Jesus was at the Sheep Gate where people washed their sheep. At the Sheep Gate was also a pool called Bethesda (meaning, *House of Mercy*).

Pool of Bethesda: It was deep enough to swim in but no one did. A subterranean stream beneath the pool would bubble up now and then disturbing the water.

Believing bubbling water to be controlled by spirits, people would remain near this water and plunge in whenever the bubbling began. Since no one knew exactly when this might happen, people gathered and waited. Supposedly the first one in was the one healed.

So popular was the pool, covered porches, colonnades were built to accommodate the crowds that gathered.

The Healing Act:

Jesus: *Do you want to get well?*

Man: *Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.*

Jesus: *Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.*

Jesus did not touch him. But it was the Sabbath! The Jews accused the healed man of doing work on the Sabbath (carrying his mat). The man had told the Jews Jesus had healed him and had told him to carry his own mat. This was serious to the Jews!

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished! This issue is linked to Nehemiah who had become concerned over folk trading, i.e., doing business on the Sabbath. So, Nehemiah stationed servants at Jerusalem's gates to ensure that no one carried burdens, i.e., packages of items in or out of the city for trade.

In Jesus' day, local church leaders had broadened Nehemiah's edict into thousands of highly specific rules.

- 1) One could not carry a needle in one's garment on the Sabbath.
- 2) One could not carry one's artificial teeth or a wooden leg on the Sabbath.
- 3) Ladies could not wear a broach on the Sabbath etc.

The healed man's only defense was that Jesus had told him to do it. Jesus would have known the law. Jesus' answer was, *even on the Sabbath,*

God's love and mercy and compassion act; and so do mine – implying that God's work and Jesus' work were the same, whatever the day.

Theory Behind This: It was common at the time to believe suffering and sin were related. One could not be cured until the person's sin had been forgiven.

Paul in Romans 5:20 responded to people who felt they could go on and sin because they had found someone who could release them from the consequences of sin, i.e., sickness.

Paul's exposition on it was that Grace was involved; i.e., *For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*. Sin and disease might be linked by cause and effect, but were not spiritually linked.

Man with the Unclean Spirit: (Mark 1:23-28) The synagogue's location is not given, but it may have been at Capernaum where Jesus was well known. The ruler of synagogue obviously permitted Jesus to speak at this specific service.

Scribes never taught while giving decisions as their own. Instead a scribe would begin with the phrase, *there is a teaching that . . .* and go on from there.

Jesus cited no authority such as this. He quoted no experts. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly said *It has been said that . . . but I say unto you . . .* This must have been a breath of fresh air to the congregants.

Traditionally the Ruler of the Synagogue would call on someone present to read that day. If a Rabbi was called on, he would STAND to read. If a non-Rabbi was called on, it would usually be only to read from the Torah. Such a person would SIT to read.

Remember the instance in Jesus' home town when he was called on to read from Isaiah. He did, and he STOOD to read as would have a Rabbi. Jesus then sat down to teach as would have a Rabbi. It angered the audience because they did not recognize Jesus as a minister; just a local boy who had gone away and made good.

This day, Jesus had been called on to read, i.e., to SIT and read.

As Jesus, who they merely considered a local man, STOOD reading (out of turn). This exchange took place:

Man: What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – you are the Holy One of God.

*Jesus: Be silent (colloquial English: **Shut up!**) Come out of him!*

The evil spirit convulsed the man and came out of him.

This scene deals with supposed demon possession. These people believed in demon possession; that much of life was thought to have been controlled by demons and devils.

Ancient graves have been opened and shown bodies with a small hole bored into the skull. It was done to let the demons out – a procedure called *Trepanning*.

If the victim survived the procedure, done without anesthetic, he bore the bone fragment as an amulet telling everyone he'd been freed from the devil.

People believed devils could procreate, were causes of blindness, leprosy, heart disease, etc. Our phrase, "poor devil", is a carry-over from this belief.

Jesus' First Miracle, Water into Wine: (John 2:11) Jesus has just been baptized by John likely on the eastern shore of the Jordan. From there, Jesus went into the wilderness just west of the Dead Sea, and from the wilderness experience, he went to Bethany and up the eastern shore of the Jordan to cross over into Cana of Galilee, crossing just south of the Sea of Galilee.

A Jewish Wedding: Any wedding of a virgin – by – law was held on Wednesday. The guests would feast all day. The actual ceremony took place in the evening. It would be dark After the ceremony, and in the dark, they would carry the couple throughout the city streets with flaming torches and a canopy over their heads as though they were monarchs. The bride and groom would be addressed as "King" and "Queen."

With no honeymoon, the couple would simply go home dressed as monarchs.

There is no mention of Joseph. It is presumed that he had died shortly after marrying Mary. That could explain why it is thought Jesus lived at

home for 18 more years. He would have taken care of Mary until his brothers were old enough to care for her.

Mary was probably involved in coordinating the wedding because when they ran out of wine, she was the one to whom they came to for help.

A Coptic Gospel, *Monarchian Prefaces* (not in the NT) says Mary was a sister to the mother of the bridegroom.

If true, the wedding might have been of John, son of Zebedee and Salome. Salome and Mary were sisters.

Jesus and the Miracle: Jesus arrived late, near the end of the feasting; that would make it evening. Jesus' disciples had been invited, too.

The wine was mixed 2 parts wine with 3 parts water. This would avoid folk becoming drunk – a disgrace.

At the request for more wine, Jesus said: *Woman, what have I to do with thee*, a common phrase at the time. NIV: *Dear woman, why do you involve me: my time has not yet come.* In context: "Don't worry; you don't quite understand what's going on here; just leave things to me, and I'll settle them my own way." Or: "I'm not yet ready to 'go public.'"

There were 6 large water jars, each one capable of holding 20-30 gallons of liquid in total equal to 120-180 gallons of water/wine. This was a large wedding!

Jesus commanded the jars to be filled to the brim so nothing else could be added. The head-waiter, the *Architriklinos*, would taste the wine before serving it.

Jesus had simply asked them to draw water from the jars and have the Architriklinos taste it. The head waiter, not knowing its' origin, drew up to the bridegroom and asked how such good wine was saved until last.

Mechanisms of Redemption

What's Wrong? Mankind has something wrong with him. We do not know exactly what it was that happened in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Some say the entire story is an allegorical attempt by Moses to explain man's problem. Some modern theorists say man's DNA was damaged. Man's DNA is damaged, but no one knows how it got that way. Theologians argue man's fall in the Garden introduced him to the concept of sin.

Two-Fold Nature of Sin: Whatever caused it, we have no human means of repairing it. Sin seems to be both a condition and a transgression. We see only the transgression. Further, man has formed volumes of laws to deal with the transgressions, but man has found no way successfully to deal with the condition that caused the transgression. It is true that *Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.*

While man could do nothing about man's redemption, God could.

Progressive Revelation; the Concept of Grace:

The concept of Grace would have meant little to the rank-'n-file folk following Moses in the desert. Today, most Christians know little of grace beyond calling it "unmerited favor."

People were granted grace because of the prospect they possessed of forming beliefs. Faith is an aggregate of beliefs, in this instance, regarding God and one's own sinful "condition."

(Rom. 4:3) *Abraham **believed** God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*

(Heb. 11:4) Abel's sacrifice was offered in **faith**, and God accepted it. Acceptance was not based on the offering itself but because it was offered in faith. He *obtained witness* (like Abraham) *that he was righteous.*

One need not understand the mechanism of faith to possess it. In the same manner, one need not understand the mechanism of the internal combustion engine to enjoy its' benefits.

Desert Wanderings and Sacrifice: The sacrifices of the Old Testament were something people, who understood little of abstractions, could do as an act of worship. The belief behind the sacrifice was vital.

(Lev. 17:11) The sacrifice was only a **means** of atonement. Prophets castigated people who put emphasis on the outward act and not on the penitence and trust (belief) that should accompany the sacrifice, i.e., guilt for sin (Isa.1:11; Jer. 7:22-23; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21; Micah 6:6-8).

Prophets did not castigate the sacrifice itself but the little regard people had for upright living, i.e., the belief system that lead to faith.

Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement: It was (is) the most important day of the Hebrew calendar: the 10th day of *Tishri*, the Hebrew month of mid-September-mid-October.

The basic idea of Yom Kippur was to cover the sin of the people – to reconcile man to God. Acts 27:9, it was “the fast day”, “the Day”, “the Great Day.”

Over time, it evolved into newer developments in worship. But its’ purpose never changed: to affect repentance, grief for sin; to gain favor with God.

Lev. 16 details the complex procedure involved in seeking atonement for the sins of the people.

- 1) The High Priest removed his official garment.
- 2) He then, clothed himself in white linen – symbolic of repentance.
- 3) He would approach two goats.
- 4) He would place a hand on the head of one goat and confess his sins. He did this supposedly to the other goat to transfer the sins of the people to it.
- 5) He would do a similar confession before each time he entered the Holy of Holies.
- 6) He would offer a bull calf as a sin offering to the priests and himself to reconcile them to God.
- 7) He then entered the Holy of Holies through a veil with a container of live coals taken from the altar of incense. It would fill the area with the odor of incense.

- 8) He sprinkled the bullock's blood on the Mercy Seat (lid of the Arc of the Covenant) and on the floor in front of the Arc.
- 9) Then, he cast lots over the two live goats brought to him by the people.
- 10) He would kill one goat as a sin offering for the nation.
- 11) He would approach the veil of the Holy of Holies again and confess the sins of the people.
- 12) He would gather the goat's blood into a bowl and take it back into the Holy of Holies.
- 13) There, he would sprinkle it on the floor in front of the Arc as he had before, this time for himself and other priests. This was also to atone for, i.e., cleanse from sin, the Holy Place itself.
- 14) He would confess the sins of the nation over the live goat as he placed his hands on its' head. This concept of the transference of guilt from one to another is present for many in today's culture.
- 15) He sacrificed the second goat and took its' blood back into the Holy of Holies, sprinkling the blood both on the Mercy Seat and on the floor before it.
- 16) He would then, send a live goat (the Scapegoat) out of the city into the surrounding wilderness to wander around and die.

Note: He started with two live goats and ended up with a third one. Research sources do not account for the discrepancy.

All of this procedure was to atone for the sins of the people.

So, which is it: Salvation, or Grace? Both salvation and grace have been companioning mechanisms throughout history. As people matured in understanding society, politics, religion, etc., God has revealed ever more of himself to man.

With sacrifice, God gave man something to do and told him why he was doing it.

With the crucifixion of Christ, God had given mankind a single sacrifice intended to cover all sin. (Actually, there were not enough animals on earth to sacrifice for each and every human being.) One's belief (actually a huge bundle of beliefs) in acceptance of that sacrifice is to accept God's offer of grace. Acceptance is so simple!

A prayer often given by ministers: *Jesus, I am sorry for my sin. Please forgive me. Come live in my heart. I receive you as the master of my life.* Note, each sentence is a statement based on a formed belief.

Hebrews 10:1-4 indicates these sacrifices had no power in themselves to atone for sin. . . . Their efficacy lay in the power of Christ's sacrifice to which as types and symbols they pointed to faith. J. Orton Wiley Vol. II p. 219.

An Emerging Church

The concept of the Emerging Church is confusing to many having heard the term. Some in the established church choose to define the concept as an evolutionary tendency among proponents of doctrine to weaken doctrinal stance and broaden church appeal, i.e., to be more inclusive. They point to denominations that, among other choices, have begun to ordain women or to ordain homosexual individuals. This, however, is not what the Emerging Church is about.

Another common opinion regarding the Emerging Church is that it consists of disavowed mainline church members; uneducated people wanting to “play church”; people wanting to make current church practices more compatible with modern culture.

First, Understand the Problem: Of American youth raised in the established church, over 50% of them will leave the church by age 29. A specific identity among many of them is no longer their default choice. Science and fiction have become intertwined so that they no longer regard one or the other as their default preference.

Many have placed knowledge of science in competition with matters of faith so that the abstractions often heard in Sunday School or sermons ring hollow in their minds. A common question many of them ask of biblical studies is *What difference does it make?*

When young people's lives become a tangle of frustrations; their lives not working out as they had planned; feeling they cannot rely on the abstractions of the established church; the established church often having failed to operationalize its' issues of faith; they drop their allegiance to the church with its' Christian principles and drift off looking for answers.

Many youths, their commitment to Christ not being strong, look for answers from a combination of social/economic/psychological/scientific principles. To them, these principles have been established by research and are not abstractions. Many of those principles were operationalized many years ago.

Their genre-preference includes a view of redemption drawn from Indiana Jones' *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* or to *x-men*.

Some are drawn to authors who have stripped the universe of the supernatural and replaced it with their own view of right vs. wrong.

Still other science writers doing this include:

Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker; Last and First Men;*

Odd John. Ray Kurtzweil's *The Singularity is Near: when Humans Transcend Biology*.

Freeman Dyson's *Imagined Worlds*.

Lee Silver's *Remaking Eden: How Genetic Engineering and Cloning will Transform the American Family; Challenging Nature: The Clash of Science and Spirituality at the New Frontiers of Life*.

One scientist and dedicated Christian serving in a main-line denomination is researching quantum mechanics in an effort to bend time.

Not Seeing the Forrest for the Trees: The response of many churches is to set up new programs to attract youth. In service of that point of view, they hold ice cream socials; they organize field trips to other churches to help paint the buildings; they start ball teams and clubs. These attempts, though temporarily helpful, fail to address the problem.

Consider two issues a few the “informed” youth might face:

Issue # 1: A theoretical youth might say:

I am told to be holy. Ok, but how? Each denomination has its' own prescription.

A typical standard response of the church is to quote scripture: Jesus said, *be ye holy even as I am holy.*

But the church fails to understand that Jesus’ statement is a command, not an operationalized answer. How does one actual do it, i.e., become holy?

Ask God to forgive your sins.

The youth responds with: *So that makes me holy?*

Another standard response is:

Follow the laws of God; to which, the youth might say;

What laws – the Ten Commandments? And so, the search descends into a discussion of church rules vs. scriptural commands.

Issue # 2: Scripture says faith is, according to Paul, the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).

An explanation of this theoretical statement can be difficult. But an academic explanation of psychological and communication theories, for example, contain both clear and detailed answers for themselves.

What People Make up the Emerging Church?

Initially the Emerging Church consisted of a mish-mash of former drug and alcohol addicts who “found God” in jail or on the street. It was, for them a safety net for their failed lives.

Over time, it has added an amalgam of thinking, talented, successful, people from organized religion who found a voice in the Emerging Church. These people are slowly forming the message and purpose of the Emerging Church.

Some of these academics, theorists, scientists and authors are conversant with theological/doctrinal concepts as well as scientific and psychological concepts. Their efforts can potentially change not only the face of the Emerging Church but of organized religion itself.

What Difference Does It Make? The Emerging Church continues to use the bible as a primary source. They continue to introduce social

programs for their members. Some of their worship protocols are similar to those of other church services.

They believe it is necessary to establish relationships with people, going where the people are, meeting them on their level, and then later presenting doctrinal truths.

This is what Jesus did. He was involved with the lives of the disciples; interacted with them; grew very close to them and taught them by example, not just propositionally.

The Emerging Church's attitude toward truth itself seems at issue. They do not view truth itself propositionally as a yes-no option. To them nothing is purely yes or no, good or bad, right or wrong, ugly or beautiful.

Their question regarding spiritual truths might be:

- 1) Is it Catholic truth?
- 2) Is it Methodist truth?
- 3) Is it Baptist truth?
- 4) Is it Hindu truth?

They commonly use such terms as *reimagine*, *tribe*, *story of Jesus*, *deconstruction*, etc.

Someone said of them: *truth-in-doctrine in the emerging church is like trying to nail Jell-O to a wall*. Their response would be, *who would want to nail Jell-O to a wall?*

They are at this time, an odd combination of a Market-Driven; Anti-Methods-Driven; Purpose-Driven; Mystical-Narcotic; mixture of ideas and practices.

What Do They Believe?

- 1) Experience takes precedence over reason.
- 2) Truth is only relative.
- 3) Translate the bible loosely.
- 4) Focus on each one's life as a developing story; a journey-of-life as expressed through a learning-narrative.
- 5) A general rejection of denominational methodology.
- 6) That some outside of Christianity will be automatically saved.

Note: Some of their internal beliefs contradict other of their internal beliefs.

But the ends they seem to seek are different.

- 1) Re-define who, where, what God is.
- 2) Re-define what one does to worship God.
- 3) Re-define the specifics of what it means to have faith; to believe in God; to be holy.
- 4) Re-define the concept of heaven, hell, and what one may do to go to either place.
- 5) Again, they might ask in many Sunday school classes, *What difference does it make to know what you are teaching?*
- 6) Re-evaluate the place of Christianity in society.
- 7) Re-evaluate the value of creed.

Warning: Although this movement seems disjointed, inconsistent and heretical, organized religion had best pay attention to it. It is GROWING, MORPHING, (Tomorrow it will not be what it is today.) If it does not die, its' influence has the potential to become a massive 21st Century culture that effectively challenges the current image of organized religion.

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