

en to this, O Job,  
stand and consider the  
wonders of God.  
Do you know how God  
establishes them? God  
makes the lightning  
his cloud to shine?  
How about the  
the thick

# TOPICAL STUDIES

OF THE

# BIBLE

ER  
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# Preface

There are various ways to study the Bible: by word, verse, chapter, book, or topic. This book on topical Bible studies will provide answers to questions we encounter every day. But no topical study is complete without an explanation of how to be reconciled to God. If the Bible is true and Jesus really is God in the flesh who died for our rebellion against him and then rose again, why should it matter to us? And what was that all about, anyway?

God originally created humanity with direct, face-to-face communion with him. But that relationship was broken by the rebellion of the first human, Adam, resulting in mortality and a cursed world. Every person since Adam and Eve has been born into this world of suffering and death, unable to directly relate to God. But God provided a way for us to be reconciled: He himself would become human and pay the ransom with his own blood to restore that relationship. But just as it takes two to reconcile, so also God has made the offer but it's up to each of us to accept it or reject it. Here is what the Bible says:

If anyone belongs to Christ, the new creation has come; the old has gone and the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ. He gave us this message to pass on: that through Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's sins against them. So we are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin in our place, to make us righteous before God. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)

That's the gospel (good news), the message of salvation, the way to heaven: Be reconciled to God by trusting Jesus Christ. And accepting Jesus by faith is the only way that can happen. To put your faith in someone is to have a deep conviction about them, to "put all your weight" on them. You can't just say the words, "I believe Jesus is God who died for us and rose again", you have

to accept this as a personal conviction. You don't just believe about him, you believe in him. You want to be reconciled to God.

Once you have as a personal conviction that Jesus is God who died and rose again to reconcile you, you are guaranteed to "go to heaven" after this life. Yes, guaranteed!

Now this God is the one who has given us the Spirit as a down payment. (2 Cor. 5:5)

When you heard the true Word, the good news of your salvation, you too were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, the down payment guaranteeing our inheritance. Praise and honor to him! (Eph. 1:13-15)

There is no other requirement, no hidden fine print, no organization to join:

By the grace of God you have been saved through faith. This is a gift from God, not something you earned, so no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)

A worker's wages aren't considered a gift, but rather payment owed for work we did. Instead, we simply trust in the One who made ungodly people righteous; our faith is what clears us of all charges. (Rom. 4:4-5)

But doesn't this amount to "a license to sin"? Of course not!

So what should we say in response to all that? Should we keep sinning so God will be even more gracious? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Ridiculous! You just don't get it. Whoever is immersed into Christ Jesus is immersed into his death, and we were buried along with him as well. Just as by the grace of God he was raised from the dead, we too will walk with him in a new life. (Rom. 6:1-4)

We wouldn't dream of living a life that angers or insults a person we claim to have reconciled with, so neither should we do this to God. This isn't about

meeting some minimal requirement to buy our way into eternal happiness, but an honest desire to be reconciled to God; it's all about the relationship. We have this guarantee of eternal happiness because of the love of God for all the world (John 3:16), so love is the "meat" of that relationship.

Naturally, the next thing to do is to find out more about God, to know what pleases him and what does not. That means studying the Bible and getting instruction from the spiritually mature, who can be recognized by how well they model the life of Christ and the disciples He chose to write the Bible. Good deeds will follow from the truly transformed life. They can be faked by the lost, and the saved are certainly spiritually "sick" if they have not changed or have fallen back into a life of sin. But we are to focus on our own spiritual health, not on whether others meet our personal level of spirituality. Spiritual maturity is not a means to a high position of rule, but a low position of service, of being an example to others, of slowly becoming like our Master and Savior. One very important factor in our spiritual growth is to hang around with other believers (Heb. 10:24-25). And this is the only way we can use the spiritual gifts God gives each believer (1 Cor. 12:7), since their purpose is to help other believers and be helped in turn by them.

So even though the only requirement to be saved is faith in the risen Jesus, this "rebirth" is not the end but the beginning, the start of a new life. But don't think that an easy life awaits you. This life is a temporary testing ground, and the test is not always pleasant or easy while you are taking it. But the reward is happiness for the rest of eternity. We live to please Jesus, in gratitude for salvation, to be His hands in this world.

Here is a list of all the changes that take place spiritually when we place faith in Jesus. It's good to refer to whenever doubts may arise, since every one of them would have to be undone in order for us to lose our salvation. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13) What happens the moment we are saved?

- declared righteous— Romans 3:28, 4:5, 24, 5:1, 9, Gal. 3:24, Phil. 3:9
- become children of God— Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 3:7, 26

- clothed with Christ– Galatians 3:27
- belong to Christ, not ourselves– 1 Cor. 6:19-20
- heirs according to the promise– Galatians 3:29-4:7
- the flesh was crucified– Galatians 5:24
- redemption through Jesus' blood, forgiveness of our sins– Eph. 1:7
- became God's own possession– Eph. 1:11
- sealed with the Holy Spirit who guarantees our inheritance– 2 Cor. 1:22, Eph. 1:13-14
- made alive with Christ– Eph. 2:5
- raised up and seated with Christ in heaven– Eph. 2:6
- brought near to God, have peace with God– Romans 5:1, Eph. 2:13
- citizens of God's household– Eph. 2:19
- sealed for the day of redemption– Eph. 4:30
- buried and raised with Christ– Romans 6:4-6, Col. 2:12
- made alive and forgiven– Col. 2:13
- died but life now hidden with Christ in God– Col. 3:3
- protected from the evil one– 2 Thes. 3:3
- given eternal life– Romans 6:23, 1 Timothy 1:16, Titus 3:7, 1 John 2:25, 5:12-13
- set free and purified– Titus 2:14
- born again– Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:3,23
- given an imperishable reservation in heaven– 1 Peter 1:4
- ransomed– 1 Peter 1:18
- kept from falling– 1 Cor. 10:13, Jude 1:24
- are God's temple– 1 Cor. 3:16
- washed, sanctified, justified– Romans 3:24, 1 Cor. 6:11
- are a new creation– 2 Cor. 5:17

# The Bible

## Language and Canon

This study will provide data from which people can make informed judgments of the Bible's content. There's no point in debating the meaning of a text before determining what words are in it. When people argue over the meaning of various parts of the Bible, they typically base these arguments on translations. But as even the KJV translators put it,

the very meanest translation of the Bible in English... containeth the Word of God, nay, is the Word of God. ([1611 KJV](#) The Translators To The Reader, sec. 13-1)

So translation is an issue of its own, but the original languages those translations come from are of the utmost importance. Yet even here we must proceed with caution, because what many think are original aren't necessarily so, and there is evidence of tampering.

Please understand that this in no way undermines the integrity of the Bible. The fact that we know of tampering proves that the truth is discoverable, and that the tampering was not perfectly concealed. This comes under the general principle that it isn't enough to **claim** something is tampered with, we must **document and demonstrate** each instance of tampering.

## Language

As far as anyone can reasonably prove, the Bible was written originally in Hebrew, Greek, and a smattering of Aramaic. What most know as the Old Testament was first written in Paleo-Hebrew (see [ancient alphabets](#)). There's nothing nefarious or sneaky about any of this; it's just how languages and alphabets change over time. So the **time** of the writing is very important to know. Yet it seems that Bible skeptics only consider such details important for

non-Biblical writings such as the Sumerian Tablets. No skepticism is aimed at those; they're just blindly accepted as ancient and true.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament, [The Septuagint](#) or LXX, was translated by Israelites around the 3rd century BC during the reign of one of Alexander the Great's generals by the name of Ptolemy Philadelphus. This was the Bible of the first century AD, the one Jesus and the New Testament writers quoted from and considered the very Word of God, even though something is always "lost in translation", as you'll recall from the quote of the KJV translators.

It should go without saying that since languages and alphabets change, any alleged codes or hidden messages have also changed. So unless someone has the full, perfect, unaltered, Paleo-Hebrew text of the Old Testament in its original order, it's impossible to determine if there were any divinely-inspired coded messages in it.

## Tampering

[The Masoretic Text](#) or MT, from which most Old Testaments have been translated, was written during the 10th-11th centuries AD, but it differed little from the Dead Sea scrolls written centuries earlier. However, it introduced vowel pointing, which compensates for the lack of vowels in the original alphabet. Yet this very addition became a commentary as much as a translation, since they could significantly change the meanings of words without *technically* altering the words inspired by God. This was very sneaky and subversive, but it didn't stop with the Hebrew scribes and sages. More about that shortly.

Now this MT differed from the LXX and quotations by historians, and it shows evidence of altering and obfuscating Messianic prophecies to counter Christian claims. We should also be aware that the Masoretes were formerly called Talmudists. An example of tampering can be seen [here](#) (lessons (621-622)).

But what of the ongoing tampering? Please see [this](#) and [this](#) (under [Part 1](#) "From a review of Epp's book") for evidence of more modern tampering

with the New Testament. Footnote 4 is about a woman named Junia who was held in high regard by the apostle Paul in Rom. 16:7. Junia was changed to Junias (masculine) without any manuscript support. The deliberate error was quietly corrected decades later, again without the required attestation. Keep in mind this is the text from which all translations were made, so the error was multiplied in many languages for many years.

Though Wikipedia is typically an unreliable source, the entry on [Junia](#) shows the same sneaky practices as those of the “vowel pointers”, by the addition of an accent on the end of Junia’s name, though the earliest manuscripts had no accents. The entry also mentions another desperate attempt to erase a woman apostle from scripture, that being that she was simply known **to** the apostles rather than being prominent **among** them, but grammatically this couldn’t hold up. Since the mention of a female apostle became undeniable, the next attempt to demean Junia was that she was a “non-authoritative” apostle— a term not found in the Bible, even by implication. So we see that the dictionaries or lexicons, and other tools such as concordances, are also part of the tampering. A concordance is how **one** translation uses a given word; it is **not** a dictionary, as explained [here](#). Strong’s Concordance, the most popular, is based only on the KJV.

Now look at the entry for the Greek word *toxon* in [Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance](#) as opposed to the [Mounce Greek dictionary](#). Notice that if you click on the base word *tikto*, it means “to beget, bring forth”; how did anyone get “apparently the simplest fabric” from that? It all has to do with something bent in an arc, as is the case for the shape of a pregnant belly, or a stick bent into a bow for shooting arrows.

As for original language “text families” for the New Testament, please see [this video](#). The gist of it is that no point of doctrine rests on a disputed reading among the various Greek texts, and that **no text families omit verses on ideological grounds**. Charges that they did so must be substantiated and not merely presumed or suspected, or based on personal prejudice. Every criticism against them has come from either ignorance or misunderstanding of this highly technical topic. God preserves the scriptures through many manuscripts in many languages and places, “the preponderance of evidence”. And when

that tactic fails, critics of modern translations resort to personal attacks on those who either assembled or copied the documents.

In the next section we will see how a comma and a paragraph break can completely reverse the meaning of a passage. Keep in mind that the earliest manuscripts were giant walls of text: all caps, no punctuation, no paragraph breaks, no [verse and chapter numbers](#). But the point here about language is that whether by punctuation, omission, addition, or formatting, both translators and the keepers of the earliest manuscripts have dared to alter the Word of God on technicalities. Yet we could never have discovered their tampering without objective evidence and consistent application of standards. We must be vigilant in overseeing the “scribes and Pharisees” who invalidate the Word of God with their traditions (Mark 7:6-13). There is also material [here](#) and [here](#) for those concerned about the debunked JEDP theory of authorship.

## Translation and Paraphrase

A paraphrase is a rewording in one language only. For example, the Living Bible reworded the ASV to modern English, but both were English, so it was a paraphrase. But the New Living Translation had Hebrew and Greek as the source languages, so it’s a translation. How **good** a translation is a completely different question, but one of degree rather than kind. **One language = paraphrase; two or more languages = translation**; nothing more, nothing less. Beyond this, the waters become much murkier, as you can see [here](#).

But to find out what **God** approves we need to look especially at the LXX, which you’ll recall from the section on Language was what Jesus himself quoted as scripture. So what approach did those translators use? The short answer is “It depends upon whom you ask.” According to [Greek/Latin forum](#), it was likely a *formal equivalence* translation, which weighs meaning more heavily than a strict literalism (a rigid mechanical approach). We see this in specific passages such as Gen. 1:1, where the Hebrew has *Elohim* and the Greek has *Theos*. Both were generic terms for deity in their respective languages and cultures. Had the LXX translators used strict literalism, they

would have **transliterated** Elohim into roughly equivalent Greek characters, as they would any other formal name.

This is a very important concept, so please take a moment to view these slides of a [hypothetical story](#). Do you see how people get so misled by sounds and letters, and not knowing the difference between translation and transliteration? There are “awake” people today who think they’re doing research when they’re really only playing anagrams, or confusing [free association](#) with the study of [etymology](#) and jumping to wild conclusions.

Now since Jesus himself approved of a thought-for-thought translation, and since even the strictest literal approach always includes some degree of that in order to be readable in the receptor language, then **interpretation is impossible to avoid** (see [KJV marginal notes](#)). So the differences in various translations are more of a sliding scale than sharp distinctions. But since Jesus was here, there has been no such thing as a perfect, divinely-sanctioned translation, and not even the KJV translators claimed divine inspiration for their work. In fact, the presence of marginal notes for uncertain words or phrases stands as indisputable evidence for their being flawed human beings like anyone else.

So what exactly makes a translation good or bad, and by what standard? The answer to that question is seen in the sheer number of translations that have been done, even within one language. Language is a tool of communication, not something people must follow slavishly. It’s in a continual state of change, so translations need to change as well. And since there are no divinely-mandated rules for translation, beyond deep respect for the words of God and mastery of both the donor and receptor languages, translators have differing ideas on how that should be done. Yet God allows it to be that way. No matter how strong anyone’s personal convictions may be, they don’t override other people’s strong personal convictions. To call other people’s convictions into question simply because they differ from our own is to lose the debate before it starts.

If translators are competent in both languages, and if they respect the text more than their personal preferences, the only remaining factor is for them to

decide where the balance is between accuracy and readability. Every translation is done by fallible, biased people with agendas, and sponsors must be satisfied in most cases. There are problems with practically every translation, but usually at different places in the text. Some, like the KJV, are pro-monarchy; some are Calvinist; some are Roman Catholic; some are politically hard left or hard right; some are universalist. But beyond the New World Translation and the Message, all faithfully present the Bible's words with the best translation they could make. Again, to say otherwise is to charge real people with malice, and that requires plenty of evidence.

Now there is still one bias that has cut across time and culture and is found in practically all translations at the same spots: the relegation of women to secondary status. To even point this out is to be labeled what we might call "the Christian F-word", *feminist*, which has changed in meaning from simply acknowledging that women are human beings, to all sorts of twisted gender perversion and leftist political ideology. It's a trigger word that shuts down all communication and rational discussion.

Remember the section on Tampering about how a comma and a paragraph break can completely reverse the meaning of a passage? The most notorious of those is on this topic, and it's found in Eph. 5:18-33 (see [this image](#)). Either support/submission is mutual (to each other), or it's some to others; it can't be both. A [book](#) and [commentary](#) are available for further study. But the point here is that **punctuation and formatting alone** can materially affect the meaning of a passage and promote any agenda desired by the translators. This is why it's **vital** to consult the original language text instead of relying upon translations.

## Canon

First, the short version: If a document on spiritual matters was written by or quoted from a prophet or apostle, it qualifies to be in the Bible canon. So since:

1. 420 BC to Christ was a time of no prophets (apocrypha, Enoch)
2. 100 AD to present is a time of no apostles (gnostic "gospels")

then documents from sources during those times are ineligible. Now before we look at the long version, understand that those long documents are the kind of research that real truth seekers must read if they consider themselves qualified to critique the Bible canon. The canon is not closed because some council or leader decided it, but because the qualifications for speaking with divine authority can no longer be met.

1. [Tekton Apologetics](#)
2. [Christian Thinktank](#)
3. [The Intertestamental Period](#), esp. para. 3 and 4 under “*The Literature of the Intertestamental Period*”

## Conclusion

As Mark Twain is alleged to have said (though for anti-theistic reasons), “It ain’t those parts of the Bible that I can’t understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.” Objections to the content of the Bible stem largely from an *a priori* rejection of its teachings, not from lack of evidence or standards. For whatever reasons, God has chosen to put his words into the hands of us “jars of clay” (2 Cor. 4:7-9), despite our imperfections.

But as stated before, there’s no point in debating the meaning of a text before determining what words are in it. If nothing else, a good case has been presented for the Bible as we know it being intact, trustworthy, and settled. From this point on, every dispute over interpretation must first agree on content, or else any preferred “wild card” (e.g. gnostic works) can be invoked to override unpleasant scriptural teachings.

## Evidence

Not all evidence is scientific. For example, we consider certain people to be criminals, but on what basis? Paper trails, money spent, character, associations, etc.— the kind of evidence presented in a court of law. That’s the kind of evidence that supports the Bible.

Now it should also be pointed out that the Bible does not violate any known, proved, valid scientific laws in its presentation of creation. Of course miracles, by definition, do violate those laws, but if such events are confirmed by reliable witnesses, we can't just dismiss them with the wave of a hand. As Sherlock Holmes put it, "when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." ~[Sherlock Holmes Quotations](#), (1890) *Sherlock Holmes in The Sign of the Four*, ch. 6 (Doubleday p. 111)

So the Bible is **not a scientifically-falsifiable** book, but we'll see that no other texts can present more support than the Bible has when it comes to both internal and external manuscript evidence. There is simply no other ancient text subjected to the same degree, and for as long a time, as the Bible, and the true skeptic must wonder why.

## Manuscript Evidence

Take a look at [this source](#). On the part about measuring layers of ink, ask yourself these questions: Who goes to this much effort to examine a document? Who puts any other writings to such extreme tests? For further documentation we'll be referring sometimes to [this source](#). Notice that several links are to refutations of claims that Christianity plagiarized or adopted earlier pagan beliefs. So the Bible is, at the very least, much more supported by objective evidence than any other ancient text. It's quite ironic when critics try to cite **older** documents to debunk it, and they uncritically accept **those** documents as true and accurate.

As for internal evidence, that source includes a link to a document called *Testimony of the Evangelists* by Simon Greenleaf, a founder of the Harvard School of Law who cross-examined the four Gospel writers and found them credible witnesses. Similar examinations of the other writers of New Testament books have shown them to be reliable as well, as far as anyone can determine. Here are a few sources:

- [Testimony of the Evangelists](#)
- [Trustworthiness of NT Writers](#)
- [Authenticity of NT Documents](#)

As for the Old Testament, these reliable New Testament writers, and Jesus of course, quoted often from it as true and accurate, in spite of the fact that they were quoting the Septuagint (LXX), the early translation of scripture into Greek. You might also want to check [this source](#).

## Extra-Biblical Evidence

As for alignment with secular history, the evidence presented so far leaves little doubt that **without references to the supernatural**, no one would question the Bible's accuracy or trustworthiness — which indicates philosophical bias. Consider [this article](#) and [another article from History.com](#). These are primarily about historical evidence for Jesus, but the first one includes a link for an earlier document on people named in the Old Testament. So on what basis does anyone reject the Bible as a historical source in its own right? We need to turn a critical eye to secular history as well. Take a look at this video and these links, which also present very interesting evidence that there was tampering with the ages of some of the people before the Flood in the Bible:

- Were the Pyramids Built Before the Flood? (Masoretic Text vs. Original Hebrew)
- LXX timeline from Adam to Abraham
- LXX timeline from Abraham to Moses

Dates for people and events from Abraham forward are easier to establish, though we have to remember that precise dates by our standards wouldn't be the norm until much later. As to the charge that the Bible as history is unreliable because of alleged bias, that charge can be made more easily against the Bible's critics. For example, in [this source](#) we see quotes from Sir William Ramsay, who was quite convinced that the Bible was unreliable — until he did his own investigation rather than relying on what his professors and colleagues had told him.

Diligent students of the scriptures need to do their own studies rather than trusting authorities for everything, but we need to be consistent and not allow personal prejudices to interfere, especially while criticizing others for the same thing. If we're going to be skeptics, we should have standards by which

we can discern between true and false, including admitting that we can't always tell.

## Conclusion

We can't leave this topic without a hat-tip to the amazing Robert Wilson:

- [The Remarkable Robert Dick Wilson](#)
- [Wiki article](#)
- [A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament](#)

## Evidence Links

The following is a collection of links to resources that show the Bible's reliability in terms of its manuscripts, translations, and content.

- [The Earliest Manuscripts](#)
  - [Old Testament](#)
  - [Dating the earliest NT manuscripts](#)
  - [More about the earliest NT manuscripts](#)
  - [Chester Beatty Papyri](#)—earliest NT copies, published by Kenyon, Frederic G. (1933-58), *The Chester Beatty biblical papyri*
  - [Center for NT Manuscripts](#)
  - [New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room](#)
  - [U of Michigan Papyrology Collection](#)
  - [Part of Gospel of John from 130 a.d.](#), John Rylands Manuscript, John Rylands Library of Manchester, England
  - [The Bible and Science](#) (Disclaimer: strongly disagree with the site's evolutionary bias)
  - [15 facts about the Dead Sea Scrolls](#)
- [The Canon](#)
  - [Bible canon facts](#)
  - [more Bible canon facts](#)

- [Did Nicea/Constantine determine Bible canon? \(not even Wikipedia thinks so\)](#)
- [Christian Thinktank on Bible Canon](#)
- [The Apocrypha, The Septuagint and the canon](#)
- [What about the Dead Sea Scrolls and Gnostic Gospels?](#)
- Contradictions and Reliability
  - [debunking the Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#)
  - [Testimony of the Evangelists](#)
  - [Did Jesus Exist?](#)
- Inerrancy
  - [the Bible, Inspiration, and Inerrancy, 1 of 3](#)
  - [the Bible, Inspiration, and Inerrancy, 2 of 3](#)
  - [the Bible, Inspiration, and Inerrancy, 3 of 3](#)
- Pagan Roots of Christianity
  - [alleged pagan roots of Christianity debunked](#)
  - [Zeitgeist Debunked](#)
  - [Zeitgeist Refuted \(full-length video\)](#)
  - [Jesus Is NOT Zeus](#)
- Tampering
  - [the Phantom Pharisee](#)
  - [more Phantom Pharisees](#)
  - [the alleged Piso family conspiracy](#)
  - [base document choices re. Deut. 3:28](#)
  - [Which OT text is right?](#)
- Alleged Evil Teachings (presuming we are more righteous and compassionate than God)
  - [Jephthah's Daughter as a sacrifice](#)
  - [strange test for suspected adultery](#)
  - [God ordering the annihilation of an entire population](#)
- Extra-Biblical Evidence

- [Jesus of Testimony](#) (full-length video)
- [The King of Nations](#) (full-length video)

## Versions and Translations

One of the most divisive teachings in the Christian community has been the claim that only the King James Version of the Bible is correct (KJVO or KJV Only), and all modern translations (in English) are corrupt, Satanic, and heretical. Further, this teaching claims that the underlying Greek text used for the KJV is superior to all others by virtue of it being the “majority/received text”, and that the KJV translation is “authorized” by God rather than an English king with an agenda. Typical catchphrases used by promoters of KJVO are *Bible believers* for themselves and *Bible corrupters* for others. The primary character of its proponents seems to be character assassination, fear, and judgment.

- [Translation and Interpretation, part one](#)
- [Translation and Interpretation, part two](#)
- [King James Onlyism](#)
- [Perils of Bible Translation](#)
- [15 myths about Bible translation](#)
- [The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?](#)
- [The Johannine Comma](#)
- [Defending Wescott and Hort](#)
- [NT written in Hebrew?](#)
- [more on Greek as original NT language](#)

## Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

Before reading and interpreting any text, a person must first understand what the rules should be for analysis, and to consistently apply those rules, regardless of what the result might be. **Hermeneutics** is the study of the principles

and methods of textual analysis and interpretation, and **Exegesis** is when a given hermeneutic is applied to a text.

The importance of this cannot be overemphasized: **People with differing hermeneutics will never agree on the meaning of a text.** So if one person believes a text to be all allegory before even beginning to read it, and another person believes one must read the text to see what it claims for itself, those two people will be unable to discuss its meaning. The debate over which hermeneutic is better is never going to be solved by us; all any of us has is our personal conviction, and no one opinion is superior to another. Every topic in the Bible will depend on this, since the Bible is literature and should be analyzed as such, using one hermeneutic consistently.

## The Literal / Historical / Grammatical Hermeneutic

This method is the opposite of cherry-picking. To put it another way, “a text without a context is a pretext for a proof-text.” ([quote from D.A. Carson](#)). By definition, the allegory hermeneutic disregards context because it’s founded on the principle that the words on the page don’t mean what they say. [One source](#) says this:

An allegory is a symbolic story. The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery defines a symbol as an image that stands for something **in addition to** its literal meaning. It further observes that it is more laden with meaning than simply the connotations of the straight image. An allegory, seen as a symbolic story, uses human characters and animals or other concepts as images that refers [*sic*] to **something other than what they are**. They have secondary meaning or reference beyond their natural sense or meaning. (*emphasis added*)

To clarify, this is not saying that the Bible contains no allegories. But some insist that the Bible is **all** allegory. Rather than **secondary** meanings, the allegorists claim there is **no literal meaning at all**. An example of an allegorical book would be Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, a story about rebellious farm animals that’s really about the Bolshevik Revolution. But to say the Bible is **never** to be taken literally but rather **always** about some spiritual principle, is to reduce the Bible to fiction, whether there’s a “real” meaning behind it or not.

By *literal*, we mean that unless there is a compelling reason to allegorize or spiritualize a passage, it should be taken as written. This is the opposite of interpretation according to preconceived beliefs. For example, if one wishes to see whether the Bible treats miracles as actual events or simply as moral lessons, one examines the text to see whether the writer is teaching or simply reporting. On the other hand, if one has already decided that miracles are impossible, then that person would be forced to interpret accounts of miracles as moral lessons, without regard for the context. And when we consider the fact that the Christian faith hinges upon a colossal miracle— the resurrection of Jesus from the dead— disbelief in miracles is completely incompatible with the Christian faith.

What literal does **not** mean is to ignore figures of speech, analogies, or genre. If, for example, we read that we are to be salt and light, the literal hermeneutic does not teach that we must become pillars of salt or oil lamps. Yet when we read that Jesus rose physically from the dead, we take it as stated since it is in the context of eyewitness testimony rather than analogy or a spiritual teaching. This distinction becomes critical at such points as when Jesus told his disciples that the bread and cup were his body and blood. It is equally critical when we read prophecy.

By *historical*, we mean that a passage must be considered in its context, which includes not only the writer and subject, but also the language, culture, era, and particular circumstances. We must also establish the fact that the Bible is not to be dismissed as historical record, simply because it's the Bible. All historical accounts are subject to the prejudices and cultures of the historians, who are all fallible human beings. A historian writing about science can be every bit as mistaken or agenda-driven as any theistic writer. So the prudent student of history will consult many historians, many records, and take them as a whole. The character of the historian is of the utmost importance, because even the most erudite prose is worthless as historical record if it omits pertinent data or twists facts.

By *grammatical*, we mean that one must have a good grasp of the language of a writing. In ancient times, there were far fewer people writing at all, so there was a greater degree of consistency in a given era. But languages are always

in flux, so the style of writing or use of grammar is one of the clues used by analysts to determine the approximate date of a document. So we must consider the meanings of words as they relate to other words around them, the style of the writer, the general style of the time, and of course the topic; words are not written in a vacuum.

The LHG hermeneutic is simply what we call reading comprehension. In fact, every instance of competent translation applies this method. So if someone agrees that translation must consider context, then to abandon context in interpretation of the translated result is inconsistent at best. It would be like reading *Animal Farm* and only guessing at the meaning behind it, since we ignore the context in history that influenced its writing.

## Figures of Speech and Genre

Some may say that the LHG method simply picks and chooses when to take things literally, but we could more easily say that the allegory method does the same, for example when it takes Jesus' resurrection literally while making everything he said an allegory. But as explained earlier, the LHG method takes figures of speech into consideration. You can see some examples [here](#).

It should also be pointed out that many figures of speech have been mistaken for doctrine or narrative. There are some examples [here](#) of what are called *idioms*. We use idioms all the time, such as “cough up the money” to mean “pay grudgingly”, and the ancients were no exception. Another misunderstood figure of speech is the [idiom of permission](#).

The LHG method also recognizes genre. It seems self-evident that if we're looking for historical narrative, we wouldn't go to wisdom literature or poetry. Or if we're reading poetry we wouldn't interpret it as doctrine. Genre is a vital part of context, and to ignore or dismiss it is to misinterpret the writing. While a historical narrative might have a section of poetry, or poetry might contain some prophecy, this hardly means that the interpretation of the entire writing is determined by its exceptions.

## **Context, Context, Context**

That expression is an obvious twist on the real estate adage, “Location, location, location”. Context is everything; it’s where we get the semantic range of words and how we interpret the words in relation to other words in sentences. A classic illustration of cherry-picking is in the combination of snippets from Mat. 27:5 and Luke 10:37; though this example is very clearly wrong, many make the same error by porting statements from one context to another and then building a theology from it.

On a larger scale, and of critical importance, is the issue of whether or not the Bible draws a clear distinction between Israel and the Body of Christ. Yet even among those using the LHG hermeneutic, debate rages over whether any such distinction exists. (See *Did the Church Replace Israel?* on this crucial issue.) Context has many layers, and we need to be careful to consider them all, if we have any hope of resolving that particular point of debate.

Context also is the foundational issue on topics such as free will (Calvinism), prophecy, and salvation itself. We should know from our own inability to communicate clearly with people in our own culture, speaking the same language, to see why this is such an important principle in Bible interpretation. Figures of speech are especially problematic, particularly when someone is joking. Communication is complex, so we need every possible element of context to be sure we understand accurately. And since we can’t transport ourselves back into the times of Biblical writings, we have to work even harder to find as much of the context as possible.

## **Reckoning Time in the New Testament**

One great source of confusion and controversy in NT studies is the precision, or lack thereof, in stating times of day. This becomes a critical issue when studying the matter of exactly what day of the week Jesus died and how long he was in the grave. But it can be fairly easily resolved by knowing what the writers meant by “hours”.

A 24-hour day in Israel began at sundown and was divided into segments called “hours” or “watches” (as relates to guard duty). Each “hour” was really a three-hour span, but it was known by its beginning; that is, the “third hour” lasted from 9 o’clock to 12 o’clock, counting from either 6 a.m. or 6 p.m. Going by the position of the sun or moon in the sky made greater precision impractical. But more importantly, the expressions **“the third hour” and “almost/about the sixth hour” refer to the same three-hour span**, with the latter meaning it was close to the end of that span. According to David Lipscomb (1831-1917), in *A Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, p. 295-296:

The whole time from the third hour to the sixth, that is, from nine to twelve, was called the third hour; and the whole intervening time from the sixth to the ninth, that is, from twelve to three, is called the sixth hour. John does not say it was the sixth hour, but about or near the sixth hour. So when he says about the sixth hour, and Mark the third hour, we are to understand that Mark takes the whole time of the third hour, from nine to twelve, and that John puts it near twelve. So in either case our Lord was sentenced between the hours of nine and twelve.

Thus we see that there is no need to speculate whether this writer used Roman reckoning and that one used Hebrew, and no basis for the skeptics’ charge of contradiction. With this knowledge we can then determine that Jesus was sentenced around 11 am, crucified by noon, darkness came till about 3 pm, and his death near 6 p.m. Combined with an understanding of the pertinent religious festivals, we can reach a more plausible conclusion as to the details of Jesus’ final week as a mortal.

## Hebrew Festivals and the Calendar

Israel used a lunar calendar, meaning the beginning of a month was marked by the first sighting of the waxing (increasing) crescent moon. Thus the full moon occurred approximately in the middle of the month. The first month of the year was the beginning of spring (our March/April) and was called Nisan (or Aviv/Abib, after the ripening of the barley harvest). This was stipulated by God in the instructions concerning the Passover Festival in Exodus 12.

That passage, which is about commemorating the passing over of the death angel when Israel was enslaved in Egypt, states that a flawless year-old male lamb (or goat) was to be selected for each family on the 10th. It was to be cared for until the 14th, when at twilight all the lambs were to be slaughtered and then eaten. This marked the start of a 7-day period beginning and ending with a “sacred assembly” (a.k.a. a special or “high” Sabbath), and all yeast had to be purged from every house for the entire 7 days. The 14th became known as Preparation Day, and the 15th was the actual Passover, though the whole festival was also called the Passover. So regardless of the Gregorian calendar dates, the Preparation was the 14th and the Passover was the 15th.

No work was to be done on any Sabbath except for certain types of food preparation (e.g., Ex. 20:9-10), and people were not to travel (Ex. 16:29). By the time of Jesus the rabbis allowed people to walk less than a mile. So if anyone is said to have worked, done business, or traveled more than a mile at some point in the Gospels, we can be sure that it was not a Sabbath day.

The Feast of Firstfruits (the first day of the week following Passover per Lev. 23:9-16), began a seven-week festival called the Feast of Weeks (Lev. 23:15-22). Firstfruits was known as “one/first of the Sabbaths,” and this phrase in Greek is imprecisely rendered “the first day of the week” in most Bibles. The Day of Pentecost was a feast marking the final day of the final week.

## **Peter, Paul, and Prosopopeia**

As it says in 2 Peter 3:15-16, “Consider the patient salvation of our Master, as our dear brother Paul writes to you in the wisdom he was given. He writes about all these things, talking about them in his letters. Some of it is hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist as they do with the other Writings, to their own destruction.” No greater understatement could be made, because misinterpretation is the greatest source of error next to mistranslation.

Prosopopoeia (also called diatribe) is one of many literary devices used in scripture, and it’s defined as follows:

1. personification, as of inanimate things
2. a figure of speech in which an imaginary, absent, or deceased person is represented as speaking or acting

In order to recognize when and where this is used, we need to examine each context, which includes the larger context of topic and writer. We will test this approach by critically examining an excerpt of a huge book called *The Deliverance of God* by Douglas Campbell.

Paul's habit in his letters was to preface the antagonist (he being the protagonist) with words such as, "One of you will say..." (Rom. 9:19), or by simply asking questions which he immediately counters (Rom. 6:1-2). So the question is whether he ever used diatribe or prosopopoeia without such a preface, and it can have a significant effect on our interpretation of his words. We will begin with an overview of his letter to the believers in Rome.

Notice the chiasmic form of the entire letter, and of portions within it. The section covered by the article is in point [D 1:18-8:11], and we see that Paul is laying groundwork as he moves toward his central point starting in chapter 9. So to take anything up to that as his conclusion is unwarranted, with or without considering it a diatribe. He draws on Old Testament people and events with his eventual central point in mind, but we must use caution in reaching premature conclusions. Now let's examine the excerpt linked earlier.

- Da, 1:18-32 Non-Jews (opposing teacher or antagonist)
- Db, 2:1-3:8 Jews (both, back and forth)
- Dc, 3:9-26 Both groups (Paul, or protagonist)
- Dd, 3:27-5:5 Faith and law (both, back and forth)

Is the section on Gentiles really the antagonist? Certainly Paul accepted the fact of history and scripture that the Gentiles had worshiped the creation rather than the Creator, so we can't say that every statement attributed to the antagonist must be false. That's a crucial point, because we'll see that Mr. Campbell considers everything the antagonist says to be against what Paul says.

Notice footnote 2 at the end of the second paragraph under “The opposing teacher's introduction of theme”: It implies that Paul was not condemning sexual perversion! If Mr. Campbell were consistent, he'd have to also say Paul did not agree that the Gentiles had worshiped false gods either. And that would make Paul a liar, as well as a rebel against God's natural order as stated at the end of Genesis 2. This is a blatant twisting of Paul's words, because it actually assigns error to the fact that the Gentiles “know God's decree” but violate it.

The truth is that Paul is establishing the situation which necessitated Jesus sacrificing himself. The clincher is that chapter 2, erroneously called his rebuttal, begins with therefore. Mr. Campbell has split Paul's own argument to make him a liar and rebel against God. All this time Paul has presented the case that the world deserves God's wrath against the Gentiles, but now he points his finger at the Jews who were thinking they were vastly superior to the Gentiles. That's what the “therefore” is there for.

But the scatterbrained splitting continues in verse 6, where Mr. Campbell breaks into the middle of the sentence, “when God's righteous judgment will be revealed, who will repay according to each one's deeds.” Footnote 3 tries to conceal this by saying Paul wasn't really talking about God's wrath against us, but the wrath we bring upon ourselves, and that we won't be held accountable for our actions in this life. Yet this same Paul stated this as a fact in 2 Cor. 5:10. Even Christians will be judged for our deeds, so how much more the unbelievers? Their judgment is stated clearly in Rev. 20:12.

Paul goes on through vs. 13 to show what he states in all his writings about the purpose and limitation of the law, so again this is not the speech of the antagonist, but his own point on his way to showing why Jesus came. You can see in the First Dialog how Paul's questions from a hypothetical person aren't necessarily antagonistic. Then skipping down to “the core of Paul's argument”, we see backing for this lesson's argument all along: that Paul is establishing the purpose and fault of the law, which necessitated Jesus coming to fulfill it on their behalf. He could not have made this case by being in opposition to those supporting statements, which Mr. Campbell attributes to error.

Under Reflections Mr. Campbell seems to argue that since the Bible contains statements of errors believed by others, then we can't say "the Bible in its entirety contains an unchanging and eternal truth." This is nothing short of undermining the inspiration of scripture. It goes on to anthropomorphize or allegorize scripture in general, which means it can be understood any way a person chooses, so just about any belief can be said to be Biblical.

What Jesus and Paul and the other NT writers did was to say what's summarized in both Acts 17:30 and Heb. 1:1-2: that God has changed his dealings with mankind at times over the centuries. But Mr. Campbell turns them into contradictions, which can only be resolved by allegorizing the Bible and turning any teaching he doesn't like into a diatribe.

The second paragraph states, "If Campbell's thesis is correct, obviously this means that our misreading of Paul's text of Romans has been colossal for almost twenty centuries." Of course, there are indeed some teachings that clearly twist the scriptures, but such twists have to be established by scripture itself, rather than by assigning any unpleasant words to diatribe or allegory.

## Conclusion

There can be no agreement between this allegorical approach and the literal approach. Bible study is impossible among people holding these opposing hermeneutics. So while prosopopoeia or diatribe is a real thing, and Paul sometimes uses it, I believe Mr. Campbell is grossly misapplying it and causing Paul, and all of scripture, to contradict itself, which he covers over by allegorization. There's simply too much in scripture to sweep away in regards to the wrath of God against evil, which is why Jesus needed to come in the first place. If you take one away, you take the other. here may be a thousand little steps between an error and its implications, but we must discern and study the scriptures carefully for that very reason.

Are many Christians willing to do the work needed for accurate Bible interpretation? Sadly, no. This is partially why there are so many denominations, translations, variations in theology, and bitter feuds. Sincere, studied, dedicated people can disagree strongly, because we're all flawed, and the day we all

humble ourselves enough to admit that, is the day communication can improve. Even so, there will always be strong differences in Bible interpretation, until God Himself returns to set us all straight. It may well be that God's purpose in allowing us to disagree is not to see who gets it right, but to see who behaves with grace and humility with those we believe to be wrong.

## Alleged Contradictions

### Introduction

Claims of Bible contradictions are nothing new. There are even entire websites dedicated to finding them, such as the *Skeptic's Annotated Bible*. It is available at [this site](#) dedicated to refuting it, so both can be seen at the same time. The SAB confuses internal and external contradictions, and it's more an atheist / evolutionist rant than purely about alleged contradictions. It really is pathetic that anyone would devote so much of their time to obsess over what they believe is fiction.

### “The day you eat it you'll die” (Gen. 2:17)

There are at least two plausible explanations, either one of which is enough to debunk this claim of contradiction. First of all, unlike Gen. 1, “day” in Gen. 2 is not combined with “evening and morning” and a number, so there's no compelling reason to demand a solar day for this passage. Secondly, there was no death before sin (Rom. 5:12), so the most straightforward meaning is that death **entered the world** at that time. The physical world, including people, began to experience decay (entropy), and people were now spiritually separated from God, since death is separation.

Another view argues that God extended grace to them. Eve didn't drop dead right then and there, and Adam saw this and decided to believe the serpent as well. God chose instead to confront them and announce a plan for redemption. There are other instances in scripture where God relents from his plans, such as after the people of Nineveh repented and were not destroyed, even though

God had Jonah tell them they would. In fact, Jonah tried to run from God precisely because he knew God might show them mercy (Jonah 3:10-4:2).

## Two creation accounts (Gen. 1-2)

Take a look at [one analysis](#). Keep in mind that ANE (ancient near east) convention was to give the summary before the main text body, which is exactly what Genesis does: Ch. 1 is about the Creator and the sequence of creation, whereas ch. 2 expands on certain points without regard for sequence. And if ch. 2 had been a different creation account, it left out significant things such as the creation of the heavenly luminaries.

We should also point out that a similar issue pertains to Gen. 1:1, since that in itself introduces the rest of the chapter. In other words, it's the title, and the narrative begins in vs. 2. Too many people, even Christians, try to make an entire history between 1:1 and 1:2, such as that there was a first creation that “became” void and empty and had to be redone. This is why study of the context and habits of ANE writers is so vital— and why lazy critics are so easily debunked.

## Contradictions between the order and out of what substances things were created (Gen. 1-2)

Of course, this is just a point of detail in the previous claim, but now we'll take a closer look at creation order since practically all such critics are evolutionists.

Light was created before the sun, so plants needing light before the sun was not an issue. (The actual first thing created was water; compare Gen. 1:2 and 2 Peter 3:5.) As for animals being brought to Adam in Gen. 2:19, nothing in the text requires that the animals were created after Adam. Even if the skeptic insists that “formed” happened just then, the fact remains that Gen. 2 shows no concern with creation **order**, as argued also at this [Apolgetics Press](#) article.

As for substance, the Hebrew word *bara* (Greek *epoiEsen*) means “to make, cause, prepare”, and the context is what **God** made: heaven and earth, sea

creatures and birds, and people. Nothing else in scripture uses the word *bara* in the simple tense, as we can see at [Blue Letter Bible](#) under “Creation Out Of Nothing”.

## God doesn't know pi (1 Kings 7:23, 2 Chron. 4:2)

What part of that says **God** doesn't know something? Ten cubits rim-to-rim is the diameter and thirty cubits is the circumference, so  $\text{circumference} \div \text{diameter} = \text{pi}$ , and  $30/10 = 3$ . Did anyone expect decimal places before the time of Christ? Does the lack of decimal places mean God doesn't know them? **Was there a little notch in the rim where the missing decimal places were?** How many pixels had to die for such a claim to even be addressed? This has to rank as one of the lamest criticisms of scripture, which we can only guess is offered because it involves math.

## Was Jonah swallowed by a whale or a fish? (Jonah 1:17)

This is another claim not really worthy of consideration. It was a huge marine creature as you can see if you look it up in both Hebrew and Greek, and the question confuses original languages with translations. As for whether it's **possible**, remember that this is the Jonah that **God had been talking to**, so why not ask that question first? Miracles aren't limited by size. After all, the argument is that since we don't know of people surviving being swallowed by sea creatures, then it must be impossible and the Bible is false. That's an example of a Black Swan fallacy, which is when someone says that **because of past experience** (or lack of it) a certain thing cannot happen or exist. As a popular saying goes, “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence”. There is simply no way to prove that the Bible story is false, especially since there are in fact sea creatures large enough to swallow a person whole.

## The Bible says there were unicorns (Numbers 24:8)

Again, confusion between original languages and translations. Only the KJV has “unicorn”, not Hebrew or Greek or any other version than Early Modern English, as you can see at [this parallel](#).

## **How many people died in the plague at Shittim when the Israelites committed adultery with the daughters of Moab? (Numbers 25:1,9, 1 Cor. 10:8)**

Take a look at [Defending Inerrancy](#).

## **Who killed Saul? (1 Sam. 31:4-6, 2 Sam. 1:1-16)**

The Amalekite **lied** about killing him, since he clearly believed he would be rewarded for killing David's enemy. The Bible simply reports the lie, because it's historical record.

## **How many stalls for horses did Solomon have? (1 Kings 4:26, 2 Chron. 9:25)**

See analyses [here](#) and [here](#).

## **In Ezekiel 26:7 the prophet predicts that Nebuchadnezzar would conquer and destroy the city of Tyre, but Ezekiel 29:18 says he failed.**

See [Defending Inerrancy](#).

## **Was Jesus born before 1 b.c. or around 6 a.d.? (Luke 1:5, Luke 2:1-2)**

The skeptics don't seem to know much about history, especially that there was more than one Herod; see *The Life of Jesus* for the timing of both his birth and death.

## **Why are the Genealogies of Matthew and Luke so different?**

See [Zondervan Academic](#).

## How did Judas die, by hanging himself (Mat. 27:5) or by being smashed after a fall (Acts 1:18)?

See [Evidence for Christianity](#)

## Was Jesus on the cross at the 3rd hour (Mark 15:25,33) or the 6th hour (Mat. 27:45, Luke 23:44, John 19:14)?

A 24-hour day in Israel began at sundown and was divided into segments called “hours” or “watches” (as relates to guard duty). Each “hour” covered a three-hour span, but it was known by its beginning; that is, the “third hour” lasted from 9 o’clock to 12 o’clock, counting from either 6 a.m. or 6 p.m. Going by the position of the sun or moon in the sky made greater precision impractical. But more importantly, the expressions “the third hour” and “almost/about the sixth hour” refer to **the same three-hour span**, with the latter meaning it was close to the end of that span; see [David Lipscomb \(1831-1917\)](#), *A Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, p. 295-296. So Jesus was condemned at about 11 a.m. and crucified at about noon, with the darkness lasting until 3 p.m., at which time Jesus gave up his spirit. Then his body was taken down by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who wrapped and buried it (John 19:38–42). This was at sundown on Nisan/Abib 14, just before the Passover itself began on the 15th. Here’s a [handy chart](#).

## Did the women buy burial spices before (Luke 23:56) or after (Mark 16:1) the Sabbath?

There were two Sabbaths that week. The first on Nisan/Abib 15 was the “special Sabbath” or Passover, and the second on Nisan/Abib 17 was the normal weekly Sabbath. The women bought and prepared the spices between them, as they could not have worked during either Sabbath. There is more detail at [Stack Exchange \(hermeneutics\)](#), and the 2nd answer (“I believe the other answer is not a good understanding...”) has the best reasoning. Much hinges upon whether the women knew Jesus would die and bought the spices before he was crucified, but I see no support for that in the Gospel accounts.

## Conclusion

In every case where contradiction is claimed, a careful study and attention to detail show no such thing. The real issue is why, among all the world's sacred texts, only the Bible gets so much scrutiny, from so many people, for so many generations, in spite of how many other texts and beliefs are well known to the skeptics, who would never allow themselves or their writings to be held to the same standards.

## The Bible and Science

Is science the true god of the Bible? Many Christians seem to think so. Please note that here we'll be referring to cosmology and evolution (in more detail under Bible Cosmology and Evolution), but pay careful attention to the difference between empirical (testable) science and engineering, and conceptual/theoretical claims.

### What is empirical science?

True science is the pursuit of understanding our world, but when it comes to claiming something is a scientific fact, certain procedures are required, called **the scientific method**:

1. Abduction:
  1. Observe a natural phenomenon
  2. Form a hypothesis about what could cause it
2. Deduction:
  1. Experiment to test the hypothesis
    1. Independent variable (cause)
    2. Dependent variable (effect)
    3. Controlled variable (constant)
  2. Experiment to test the null hypothesis (attempt to falsify)
  3. Analyze the results

## 4. Repeat

## 3. Induction: only deals in probabilities

If something is not a naturally-occurring phenomenon and cannot be tested via the scientific method, then no theory about it can be called scientific.

## What is pseudoscience?

A past event, such as the Big Bang or abiogenesis, cannot meet the standard required to call itself a scientific theory, much less a fact. So such theories are mere philosophical assumptions and guesses. Investigating the past is in the realm of probability and is highly subjective. In fact, science prides itself on its instability, since what it theorizes today may be abandoned tomorrow. So pseudoscience is the only thing that really evolves, since interpretation of data is according to the philosophical bias of the interpreters. And by the way, since it's always changing, its defenders shouldn't get upset when people disagree with current theory.

## Is cosmology really a science?

The [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) defines cosmology as:

- 1a: a branch of **metaphysics** that deals with the nature of the universe
- 1b: a theory or **doctrine** describing the natural order of the universe
- 2: a branch of astronomy that deals with the origin, structure, and **space-time** relationships of the universe

(emphasis mine; also note that **cosmogony** deals only with the **origin** of the universe)

Given the definitions of empirical science and pseudoscience, which should cosmology be classified as? Metaphysics is not physics; doctrine is not observation; relationships among entities in a hypothetical realm (space-time) is not observation of the natural realm. In fact, so-called space-time is conceptually impossible, since nonphysical entities cannot be bent or considered a physical dimension — and if not physical, then not scientific. The scientific method is

bound entirely by naturalism, which by definition must exclude the nonphysical or supernatural. Since space-time is nonphysical, then it cannot even be a **scientific** theory.

## The standard of truth/fact

If we accept that the Bible is inspired by God, then it must follow that the Bible is not false and does not teach (rather than merely report) inaccuracies. So let's take a look at the cosmology presented by the Bible, in Genesis 1, Job 38 and 40, and Joshua 10:12-14. Context is everything, and these contexts, while sometimes poetically expressed, never paint a picture of the universe that matches modern cosmology.

Without getting into the details of a debate over the size of the universe or shape of the earth, consider these questions in light of how scripture presents them:

- Should Gen. 1 bow to a theory that doesn't even meet the requirement of being called scientific?
- If the Bible wanted to present the six days of creation as literal 24-hour days, how much more clearly would it need to have been expressed than "evening and morning, the \_\_th day"?
- Since the order of creation in Gen. 1 does not match evolutionary theory, should we dismiss the Bible or evolutionary theory? Can we ignore the sequence given in scripture? (see previous point)
- Was the earth orbiting the sun in the days before the sun was created?
- On the long day of Joshua, did the earth stop spinning or did the sun and moon stop moving?
- What effects should have been reported in at least some parts of the world if earth had been spinning and then stopped for about 24 hours?
- Even in the most poetic passages, is earth **ever** described as a spinning ball, or that it moves through space?
- The Bible only describes the luminaries as the sun, moon, and stars, with some stars "wandering" (the meaning of *planet*). On what Biblical basis do we believe that "planets" are not stars? Or that earth is a planet?

## Conclusion

Should the Bible bow to an unstable patchwork of guesses and philosophy? Do we trust God or man? The Bible has passed every test of its claims about history, so why do we not trust its claims about nature, which God created? Instead, we try to force-fit scripture into the latest philosophical framework, or dismiss it as allegory or “theological messaging”. Who is really our God? Who is the the most trustworthy source of truth and fact? Scripture must be read in context, so if the context is historical narrative rather than moral lessons or wisdom literature, we must take it as factual. And if current claims of scientific fact don’t match, we can only hope that someday those claims catch up to reality.

## Bible Cosmology

The Bible is not a **science** book, it’s a **truth** book. But many seem to think science books are the Bible; that is, they treat what is called science as the highest authority to which even the Bible must bow. This matters because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, so it cannot teach falsehoods. No excuses can be made for the alleged “primitive” knowledge of the times, especially since the ancients could navigate long distances without compasses or electronic signals, and build impressive structures without computers or motorized machinery. God is not the author of confusion or deception, and a Bible reduced to allegory every time it says something we don’t like is not worth our efforts to study, much less to obey.

## What is Science?

We must first of all dispel the notion that “science” is infallible or settled. In fact, the constant changes in scientific theories are considered “a feature, not a bug” — and one proudly embraced by anyone defending them. Today’s vigorously-defended scientific fact may be tomorrow’s laughable ignorance. Yet one must wonder why ever-changing beliefs are defended with such fierce zealotry. Disagreement with today’s “science” is treated as damnable heresy, though tomorrow it may be hailed as the newest advance.

At this point, some may jump to the conclusion that the Bible or the Christian community is “anti-science”, but the opposite is true. Genuine scientific practice, adhering to the scientific method (see *The Bible and Science*), is by definition observable, testable, and repeatable. If it works, it works, and we can observe this consistently. *Why* it works is a completely different question, and the government school system sees to it that certain questions are not asked. Fact is fact, not theory or conjecture. The Bible deals in fact/truth, so any claims that contradict it are false. No one can claim to support the Bible as inspired by God while at the same time interpreting it through the lens of ever-changing philosophical presumptions, as is commonly mistaken for empirical science. A Christian must choose between the Bible and the religious philosophy of Scientism.

## What is *not* Science?

Quite simply, any claim that cannot meet the standards of the scientific method. There are other “sciences”, meaning topics of study such as biology or geology, which may use the scientific method as *part* of their work, so be careful with how that word is used in context. If something is claimed to be “scientific”, it must at least require observation and testing, without jumping to unwarranted conclusions. Above all, to claim something as a scientific fact, one **must** rule out any other possible causes of the observed effect. This is crucial, since merely demonstrating that one theory is **possible** does not mean that other theories are **impossible**.

So would the theory of evolution qualify as scientific? Only in the very barest sense, in that some actual experimentation may be used to determine the composition of a rock or fossil. But the theory as a whole— whose definition seems to be the only thing that actually evolves— cannot qualify. Observation and analysis are not scientific proofs by themselves. Neither does the theory rule out other theories. So it should be obvious that any philosophical guesswork on **how** or **when** something came to be in its present form can never qualify as science. Knowing this, we can say with confidence that the creation account in Genesis can never be debunked by the theory of evolution— again, whatever that may mean on any given day. Every attempt to date the earth or living things begins with begging the question that we must calibrate the scale

for millions or billions of years. It would be like using an oven thermometer to gauge human body temperature.

Likewise, would modern cosmology qualify as scientific? It cannot, since observation is not a scientific proof in itself. Claims of instruments sent to distant (presumed) worlds are easy enough to make, but most of humanity is incapable of testing those claims. We must trust/have faith in those making the claims; that is, cosmology has become a kind of esoteric system whereby only the adepts (scientists) can understand the mysteries. All we can honestly observe is that there are luminaries in the sky, which move according to very consistent patterns. In fact, one only needs long and careful observation of those patterns in order to make predictions of their future movements. This is how the ancients could be so uncannily accurate in their calendars. The age, shape, or location of earth is irrelevant for the predictions of the luminaries' movements— except when we consider that the constellations have maintained their shapes for many thousands of years, which greatly questions the notion that earth has been hurtling at breakneck speed through endless (presumed) space for billions of years.

## What does the Bible say?

Regarding the **age** of our realm, Genesis 1 is often claimed to be an allegory (“theological messaging”) where the days are really long eons. But the repeated phrase “evening and morning, day \_\_\_” leaves no room for speculation or ambiguity. We also see in the 4th Commandment (Exodus 20:11) that remembering the sabbath day is in commemoration of creation week and is observed every seventh day— not every seventh eon. To object that this is symbolic is to beg the question, since scripture never indicates symbolism for creation week in any context. The **only** reason anyone tries to symbolize or allegorize creation week is the presupposition that “science” has proved that Genesis 1 cannot be taken literally.

Regarding the **structure** of our realm, not once does the Bible speak of earth in terms of rotating, moving, or floating, but only/always as fixed and immovable:

- **Gen. 1:14** no sun for earth to orbit until Day 4
- **Gen. 1:16** sun/moon rule/dominate/begin the day/night. Since light in Gen. 1:3 is a created thing it cannot be simply God's light. Since created light predates the luminaries, then they are delegated governors of created light, and they will not last forever (Rev. 22:5).
- **Joshua 10:12-13** sun and moon stood still, not that earth stopped rotating
- **1 Sam. 2:8** world on foundations
- **2 Kings 20:8-11** God briefly reversed the path of the sun, not the earth
- 1 Chron. 16:30 earth not moved
- **Job 26:7** northern skies spread over emptiness, earth not suspended
- **Job 37:18** skies spread out hard as mirror of cast bronze
- **Psalms 93:1, 104:5** world firm and secure, never moved from foundations
- **Ecclesiastes 1:5** sun rises/sets and hurries back to rise
- **Isaiah 40:22** circle (not ball) of earth, stretched heavens like canopy over a tent

The Hebrew word in Isaiah 40:22 is *chuwg* which means circle, circuit or compass. Earlier in that same book, Isaiah 22:18 says God will “roll you up like a ball and throw you”, and the Hebrew word there is *duwr* which means round or ball, something thrown. They knew and understood the difference between a circle and a sphere.

## Conclusion

There is simply no excuse for making the Bible bow, via selective (arbitrary, inconsistent) allegorization, to what is falsely called science but more accurately called pseudoscience or philosophy. We cannot obey two very diametrically-opposed masters. We must demand rigorous proof of every great claim, especially when it clearly opposes what God revealed to us. We cannot allow peer pressure or societal shaming to make cowards or compromisers out of us.



# The Christian Faith and Community

## The Christian Faith Is Unique

### Introduction

Some say that since all gods have similarities then all gods are the same. But that's like saying that since house cats and lions have similarities, then house cats are lions (see [formal fallacies, affirming the consequent](#)). It's the **differences** that matter most, not the similarities. So when the characteristics of various deities conflict, it's impossible for them all to be identical. We will see the ways in which the Christian faith differs from all others, by examining the following points:

1. It appeals to evidence and credible witnesses
2. Its founder rose from the dead
3. It teaches that God became man, not that man becomes God
4. It teaches an adoptive relationship with the Creator
5. It teaches salvation by faith alone
6. It teaches that God is a Trinity
7. It's singled out for hyper-criticism

### 1. It appeals to evidence and credible witnesses

Evidence concerning people and events of the past requires testimony and cross-examination, as well as some physical evidence such as artifacts ([definition](#) and an [example from a hostile witness, Nat. Geo.](#)) and writings ([textual criticism](#)). Credibility of witnesses, especially the testimony of **hostile** witnesses, is a major factor in establishing the facts of a claim (see [witness credibility](#)), and we must never presume their character one way or the other. But the crucial point is that no other "faith tradition" even tries to approach the same level of appeal to evidence as does the Bible, nor the same degree of corroboration with historical records outside of their sacred writings.

For a sample of how the Bible goes out of its way to reference people and events its contemporaries could examine, take a quick look at [this outline of the life of Jesus](#). People who invent fictional heroes don't do things like that. Now let's look at what the Bible itself says about witnesses and evidence:

- Acts 1:8, 2:32, 3:15, 4:20, 5:32, 10:38-41, 13:31, 1 Cor. 15:6
- John 3:11, 1 Tim. 3:16, 2 Tim. 2:2, 2 Peter 1:16, 1 John 1:3

How many people saw what Mohammad claimed to have seen? The same question for Joseph Smith of Mormonism, and there are many similarities between those two men. How many of their **enemies** saw miraculous healings? How many of those enemies wanted to kill the healer because he was stealing their popularity (John 11:45-50, 12:9-10)?

## 2. Its founder rose from the dead

We've established what evidence is and what credible witnesses are, and that the Christian faith hinges on the fact that Jesus physically died, was buried, and physically rose again. **There is no Christian faith without this event** (1 Cor. 15:2-8, 14, 19). Many claim that this never happened, but that it was a borrowed story from older sources— without any skepticism of those sources, without any demand for the same level of proof required for the Bible. Take a moment to read [a critique of claims the Bible borrowed its concepts](#).

According to evidence and careful research, charges of borrowing are much more easily laid at the feet of the pagan religions, who either blended Christian teachings with their own, or were wrongly interpreted by modern critics of the Bible. Many today still make claims such as that Jesus as the Son of God is really the “sun god”, in spite of explicit scriptures condemning the worship of the luminaries (Deut. 4:19, 17:3). This is utter fallacious and ignorant nonsense. What would be the point of reading the Bible at all if we can ignore the context, specifically the meanings of words in their sentences and paragraphs?

### 3. It teaches that God became human, not that humans become God

One major theme running through most religious belief is that human beings can either become gods, or be unified with the divine, or be absorbed by it. Mormons, for example, believe that they can become gods. [This article](#) quotes their president Hinckley: “as God is, man may become. We believe in eternal progression.” [Here](#) is another article about *theosis*, a belief in common with [Eastern Orthodox doctrine](#). But the Bible is unique in teaching that God became human, not just in **appearance** but in **actuality**. This joining of two natures is known formally as the **hypostatic union**, which incidentally was the real topic of [the First Council of Nicaea](#).

The scriptures showing this unique teaching of our faith are John 1:1-4, 14, Col. 1:15-20, John 14:9, Phil. 2:5-11, and Rom. 8:3. Instead of making people sacrifice for God, he sacrificed himself for us, as shown in Rom. 3:25, 5:8, 1 Cor. 5:7, Eph. 5:2, Heb. 7:27, 9:26-28, 10:12, 1 John 2:2, and 4:10. These scriptures show that Jesus’ death proved he is God: Mat. 26:28, Heb. 9:20, and 16-17. Let’s express this as a syllogism (deductive reasoning):

1. The New Covenant could not be enacted without proof of the death of the one who made it.
2. The one who made it was God, so God would have to die.
3. Jesus died and enacted the New Covenant.
4. ∴ Jesus is God.

God becoming man is the exact opposite of what the world’s religions teach—even the “unorganized” ones. The distinction between “organized” and “unorganized” religions serves only as an excuse to marginalize, segregate, and quarantine faiths that are deemed inferior to “spirituality”. The presence or lack of organization has exactly nothing to do with a faith’s rightful place in discussions of the supernatural.

The idea that we would need God to stoop down to help us bruises egos, and some jump to the ridiculous conclusion that Christians just sit around and do nothing while we wait for Jesus to return and clean house. But the fact is that

Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves, and that being God didn't stop him from lowering himself to our level to lift us up. No other alleged god is believed to have done such a thing. This is **not** the same as any god temporarily manifesting in human form; it is God **actually taking on human nature** and becoming one of us, then sacrificing himself for us though he had no obligation to do so.

The implications of the dual nature of Jesus are covered in the next two points.

#### 4. It teaches an adoptive relationship with the Creator

There is no other faith that speaks of God adopting us as his children. Most say all people are already children of God so there's no need for a Savior, but none have any teaching like adoption and inheritance, as shown in Rom. 8:15,17,23, Gal. 3:29, 4:5, Eph. 1:5, 3:6, Titus 3:7, 1 Peter 3:7, Heb. 12:8 (not all are children of God). Adoption refutes the claim that we should earn our salvation, because adoption is an act of love and relationship, not a business transaction. This brings us to **THE** most important doctrine of the Christian faith.

#### 5. It teaches salvation by faith alone

Even many Christians don't grasp this concept, but no non-Christians accept it. The vast majority of people of any faith believe they must work for and earn "salvation". Many are offended by the idea of humbling themselves to receive a gift, yet a gift it is, per Mat. 9:16-17, Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 4:2-5,16, 2 Cor. 9:15, and Rev. 22:17.

Gifts and wages are mutually exclusive; we can't earn a gift. Jesus illustrated this in his parables of the wineskins and cloths; the old (law) and new (grace) cannot be mixed. Adoption has nothing to do with how good we've been or what we might be able to do for the one adopting us; it's about how much we're loved. Nothing else matters but whether or not we accept the offer and want to be a part of a new family, instead of staying in the orphanage. Neither

can we take it by force or buy it with our own efforts; we can only accept it in humble gratitude, or reject it in angry pride. Name another faith or spiritual perspective that comes close to that.

It's important to understand that a gift also can't be forced upon anyone. There is no fate or predetermination as to who will receive this gift of eternal life, regardless of objections and -isms both inside and outside of the Christian faith. The freedom to make this conscious, moral choice is crucial, or else God is reduced to a puppeteer whose delicate ego cannot endure the possibility of rejection. This doesn't mean we have the free will to flap our arms till we fly, or other absurdities; it means God wants our love, and for love to be genuine it must be free.

## 6. It teaches that God is a Trinity

Take a look at Isaiah 46:9-10, which can be seen in a [Hebrew interlinear](#). God says "I am El and there is no other; I am Elohim (plural) and there is none like me." If God is simply either one or several, in the strictest sense of the words, there is no explanation for the mismatch of singular and plural. Also consider [this article](#) on the topic.

## 7. It's singled out for hyper-criticism

Last but not least, we have the phenomenon of near-universal rejection of the Bible more than all other sacred texts— proof that it isn't just Christians who think our faith is unique. The excuse used to be that most critics are familiar with only Christianity, so they attack it just because it's the only religion they encounter. But that doesn't work anymore; the internet has made all sorts of beliefs and texts familiar to millions— which is why this study on uniqueness is even necessary. Almost all others are left alone, or blindly accepted, and there are no websites, forums, or channels dedicated to their destruction and mockery, as is the case for the Bible and the Christian faith.

In fact, western society in particular seems to bend over backwards to accommodate such religions as Islam or Hinduism or even Wicca, while the

Bible and Christian faith are marginalized, mocked, and excluded. Most of all, what other text besides the Bible has been dissected by so many who shouldn't even care what it says? Where are the Hollywood movies about discoveries that prove the Vedas are corrupt? How many people (besides Christians) go around demanding that Muslims defend the Quran?

There's simply no denying that a double standard is employed around the world when it comes to matters of faith and practice. Yes, people of various religions fight among themselves, but the fight is to silence the people, not disprove their sacred texts or look for hidden ancient documents that they insist should be in the other religion's canon. The "why" is left to the reader to ponder. But if someone is a die-hard enemy of the Bible and the Christian faith, consider the fact that such opposition serves as a strong hostile witness to further support the uniqueness of this faith. People only attack fables if they think they're doing harm, but an idea isn't harmful just because someone doesn't like it, and it isn't false just because someone doesn't believe it. Consider this as well: **Jesus is the only "religious figure" who thinks we're to die for**, per 2 Corinthians 5:17-21:

If anyone is united with the Anointed One, they're a new creation; the old one has passed away and become something completely new! Yet it all comes from God, the one who made this possible and has given us the assignment of bringing people to him. It was through the Anointed One that God reconciled the world to himself, meaning he would no longer hold their sins against them. This is the message he gave us; we're the Anointed One's representatives and God pleads through us. So we're speaking for him when we plead with you to be reconciled to God. This one who never sinned was made to be a sin offering on our behalf, so that because of him we can be in a right relationship with God.

## Spiritual Birth and Growth

2 Cor. 5:17-21 Whoever is united with Christ is a new creation; the original has passed away and become something completely new! Yet it all comes from God, the one who reconciled us to himself by means of Christ and com-

missioned us to this service. God reconciled the world to himself through Christ, not holding their sins against them, and gave us the message of reconciliation. That means we are Christ's representatives and God pleads through us. So, on behalf of Christ, we plead with you to be reconciled to God! For this one who knew no sin was made to be Sin for our sakes, so that because of him we can become right with God.

That's the gospel, the message of salvation, the way to heaven: **Be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.** Accepting Jesus by faith is the only way that can happen. To put faith in someone is to have a deep conviction about them, to trust them. Merely saying the words, "I believe Jesus is God who died for us and rose again" isn't the same as a personal conviction. We don't just believe **about** him, we believe **in** him, to be reconciled to God. Once we have the personal conviction that Jesus is God who died and rose again to reconcile us, we are guaranteed to be with Jesus after this life, and there is no other requirement, no hidden fine print, no organization to join:

2 Cor. 5:5 Yet the same God who put this longing inside of us also gave us the Spirit as a down payment.

Eph. 1:13-14 Likewise for you who heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. You believed and were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the down payment that guarantees our inheritance. Praise and honor to him!

Eph. 2:8-9 Because of God's favor you have been saved through faith. This is all a gift of God, not something you did, so nobody can brag.

Rom. 4:4-5 A worker's wages are not considered a gift but a debt. In contrast, the one cleared of all charges is the one who does not work but rather trusts in the One who justifies the ungodly.

A gift can only be accepted or rejected, never earned. So the gift of salvation can only be obtained by humble acceptance. That being the case, it can never be lost by failure to do enough good deeds. Please see the list at the end of [this](#)

[source](#) for all the things that happen the moment we're saved, all of which would have to be undone in order for salvation to be taken away.

Salvation is like adoption. We were all born into this "orphanage" and God offers to make us his legal heirs, with the promise of taking us to live in his fabulous mansion. Yet adoption is more than a change of address; it's a change of **relationship**. God wants us to accept **him**, not just his house or possessions, and be part of his family. This offer can't be given by force, trickery, fear, or deception, and it can't be lost or given away.

## Growth

Birth is not the end but the beginning. A baby who never grows has a serious problem but is born nonetheless. Yet this isn't a license to sin:

Rom. 6:1-4 What should we conclude from that: that we should keep on sinning so that God's favor will keep increasing? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Ridiculous! You don't seem to understand that those who are immersed into Christ Jesus are immersed into his death. And just as we were buried together with him through immersion into his death, so also, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the favor of the Father, we will keep pace with him in a new life.

We wouldn't dream of living a life that angers or insults a person we claim to have reconciled with, so neither should we do this to God. This isn't about meeting some minimal requirement to buy our way into eternal happiness, but an honest desire to be reconciled to God; it's all about the relationship. We have this guarantee of eternal happiness because of the love of God for all the world (John 3:16), so love is the essence of that relationship. Naturally, the next thing to do is to find out more about God, to know what pleases him and what does not. That means studying the Bible and getting instruction from the spiritually mature, who can be recognized by how well they model the life of Jesus and the disciples he chose to write the Bible.

Good deeds will follow from the truly transformed life. They can be faked by the lost, and the saved are certainly spiritually weak if they haven't changed

or have fallen back into a life of sin. But we are to focus on **our own** spiritual health, not on whether others meet our personal level of spirituality. Spiritual maturity is not a means to a high position of rule, but a low position of service, of being an example to others and slowly becoming like our Master and Savior. One very important factor in our spiritual growth is to spend time with other believers (Heb. 10:24-25). This is the only way we can use the spiritual gifts God gives each believer (1 Cor. 12:7), since their purpose is to help other believers and be helped in turn by them.

So again, even though the only **requirement** to be reconciled to God is faith in the risen Jesus, this spiritual rebirth is not the end but the beginning, the start of a new life. However, this doesn't mean that an easy life awaits us. This life is a temporary testing ground, and the test is not always pleasant or easy while we're taking it. Yet the reward is happiness for the rest of eternity. We live to please Jesus, in gratitude for salvation, to be his hands in this world.

## Spiritual Gifts and Wages

This study will focus on the sharp distinction between gifts and earned wages, and the gifts given to believers by the Holy Spirit.

### What spiritual gifts are for

Read these scriptures to learn what it means to have the Holy Spirit given to us: Rom. 8:26-27, Rom. 12:3-8, Rom. 15:13, 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 1 Cor. 12:28-30, 2 Cor. 3:18, Gal. 5:22-26, Eph. 4:4-7, 1 Thes. 5:19-21 and 1 Peter 4:10. We could summarize this as follows:

- We make up the temple of God since his Spirit lives within us.
- The Holy Spirit helps us in many ways, including praying on our behalf when we just don't have the words.
- Different spiritual gifts are given to each believer, so we need to use them to help each other in order for the Body of Christ to function properly.
- The Spirit transforms us into the image of Jesus as we mature in the faith.

- Our character and behavior exhibit the “fruit” or evidence of the Spirit in us as we mature, such that lack of such evidence should be a matter of great concern.
- We must not squelch, limit, or grieve the Spirit; this is a choice we make.

Again, the Holy Spirit gives gifts, not earned wages for which we can receive rewards/payments. Rewards are what we earn by our choices and behavior, the character we choose to exhibit in our mortal lives.

## **Gifts and wages**

Scripture makes a sharp distinction between what is received as a gift and what is rewarded as earned wages for our works; read Rom. 4:1-5, Rom. 11:6, Rom. 14:10-13, 1 Cor. 3:12-15, 2 Cor. 5:10, Gal. 5:4, and Eph. 2:8-9. So any passage using the terminology of gifts or grace can have nothing to do with our works or deeds; conversely, passages using the terminology of wages, debts, or rewards have nothing to do with gifts. Therefore, since salvation is presented in terms of gifts, it can never be either earned or lost, but rewards or wages can be lost by inaction or sinful action. There would be no purpose for the future judgment of our deeds if they don't matter, so we need to take seriously the way we choose to live.

## **Abuse and neglect**

Neglect of our spiritual gifts is probably the most common problem among Christians in general, because many either don't care or know what theirs are. There are many who serve in various capacities in church organizations: music, encouragement, prayer, administration, etc. But what about the gifts of knowledge, teaching, prophecy, or healing? These are the ones that tend to be at one extreme or the other. Many have dismissed them, either due to the teaching that such gifts have ceased, or as an overreaction to their abuse.

None have been more abused than the gift of “tongues”, meaning being temporarily able to speak in a language we don't know, or to interpret a message given that way. Instructions on the handling of this gift are given clearly in 1 Cor. 12 and 14, and there is no hint that such gifts have ceased. (Some take 1

Cor. 13:8 to mean that, but the text does not support it.) But these rules are rarely followed, which has led to chaotic babbling being substituted for messages from God, and heresies such as that a person isn't really saved until and unless they demonstrate this gift.

Another abuse is the gift of prophecy; some claim to be prophets whose alleged messages from God cannot be tested or questioned, in spite of 1 Cor. 14:29-33, 1 Thes. 5:20-21, and 1 John 4:1. Keep in mind that those who fight for authority are the least qualified to have it. On the other hand are people who claim messages from God on a daily basis, along with personal tours of heaven and assurances that they have been selected for being so very special and holy. This is abuse of the prophetic gift, since it flies in the face of scripture in general regarding the way God speaks through prophets, and it draws attention to the person rather than to God. Mark and avoid anyone with such claims.

There is a gift of prophecy which is for building up the church (1 Cor. 14:3-4), but nothing is said in the instructional passages about telling the future. It's contrasted with speaking in tongues, so it seems to mean instruction and information for the entire congregation. The gift of knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8) seems to be more what we'd call insight or perception or understanding for the whole congregation. This may be confused with the gift of wisdom, which probably is more focused on dealing with individual problems rather than the whole church. So though prophecy, knowledge, and wisdom have similar qualities, they seem to have different purposes or scopes.

Though there is nothing in scripture to say the sign gifts have ceased (tongues, miracles, visions), there have been no prophecies or miracles for the whole church around the world since the apostles died. After all, though apostles are among the spiritual gifts, there have been no more of them because Jesus is not physically here to commission them; otherwise many others over the centuries could have added to scripture. Eph. 2:19-22 specifically names apostles and prophets as **foundation gifts**, and since one has ceased, it would be reasonable to say that so has the other. These two gifts are the way we know who can write or sanction scripture, as explained in studies on the Bible canon. We

can get tangled up in terminology, but this passage puts a firm lid on speaking “thus saith the Lord” for the entire Christian community.

1 Cor. 14:29-33 does indeed say that others must test the prophets’ messages, but how is this done? The only objective method is comparing them to the Word of God, which means that whatever is said cannot violate scripture. Emotion or anecdotal evidence is not in view here. Besides that, for what purpose would be specific prophecies of riots in a few American cities for example, while none were given for the horrific persecution of Christians in muslim or communist countries? It’s the same critical flaw as with the so-called blood moon prophecies; they are very selective in their application, since they allegedly tell of the timing of the rapture but not the holocaust or the infiltration of once-Christian colleges by satanists and subversives. This is how we weigh and test.

## Conclusion

The Christian life is both inward and outward; what we are inside is expressed in how we live and interact with others (Mat. 15:11). A person who has humbly accepted the gift of eternal life and adoption as a child of God should know not to bury it in the ground or use it as a license to sin. To even ask how much we can get away with (either by abuse or neglect) means we really don’t understand salvation at all. Instead, we should only look for faults within ourselves, and look outside ourselves for ways to lift up others. Above all, our motive should be humble gratitude and compassion, to live every day like Jesus matters and we can’t wait to see him directly.

## Food, Water, and Money

Must Christians observe the Lord’s Supper? Must we practice water baptism? Must we tithe? Tradition says one thing, and scripture says another. There are two so-called ordinances of the faith: water baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and tithing has been mandated by churches since a few hundred years after the time of Christ (see [this source](#)). As a general principle, to call something a command for Christians, there must be a clear statement about it, such as rules

to perform it or penalties for not performing it, and it must be directed at the Body of Christ specifically. Let's study this in the light of scripture.

## The Lord's Supper

This event is described in Mat. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:14-20, 1 Cor. 10:16, and 1 Cor. 11:20-34. Jesus said that it was to be a memorial, but he left the details up to us; no specific year, day, or time, no presiding official, no instructions on how to conduct it or even what to eat or drink beyond bread and wine.

Even so, there is clearly more support for this being an ordinance than for water baptism, yet we still don't have a command for when, where, and by whom this is to be done, nor a penalty for not doing it at all— though there is one for doing it disrespectfully. It cannot save us, or make us more spiritually mature, or give us better standing in the Body of Christ. Failure to practice it should never be grounds for disfellowshipping or shaming any believer.

The habit or tradition of the earliest believers was to “break bread” in each other's homes, but it simply referred to sharing meals. We have a description of a particular memorial meal in 1 Cor. 11, but the only difference seems to be that the people celebrated some meals as the memorials. All the Apostle Paul states is that those should be done with dignity.

For a study on general dietary questions, see *Is Eating Meat A sin?*

## Water Baptism

Take a look at Mat. 3:11, Acts 2:41, Acts 8:38, Acts 10:48, Acts 11:16, Heb. 11:29, and 1 Peter 3:20-21. Yes, in various places it shows people getting water baptized when saved, but there's nothing about a command for all Christians for all time to perform it, nor a penalty for not performing it. In fact, the point in some of those passages was to **not** get into the water, and our baptism is by fire **instead of** water. As with the Lord's Supper, water baptism cannot save us, or make us more spiritually mature, or give us better standing in the Body of Christ.

## Tithing vs. Giving

There were three tithes in the Old Testament that totaled 23-1/3% annually, as seen in Num. 18:24 and Deut. 14:22-29:

1. the Levitical tithe for the priests who had no land
2. the Festival tithe for a great national party
3. the Poor tithe for supporting the needy

All tithes were of food (not cash), specifically the best food, for the nation of Israel, and for those without the means to feed themselves. But what about Gen. 14:17-20, Malachi 3:9-10, and Mat. 23:23? Abraham tithed **once** to a priest, **on the spoils of war**, not as a regular habit and on everything he owned. Malachi presents a scathing denunciation by God against the people of Israel for breaking the terms of **their** covenant. There is simply no command given to the Body of Christ for this, which is why any and all sermons on tithing come from the Old Testament.

Now let's look at what the New Testament actually says to followers of Jesus about giving. In Rom. 6:14, 1 Cor. 16:2,8, 2 Cor. 8:12-15, 2 Cor. 9:6-7, and Col. 3:17, we see that the church is not the storehouse, the preachers are not the priests, we're already supporting the poor, and it's impossible to "give without compulsion" when we're being given guilt trip sermons on not tithing on our gross income and every little bit of cash we get to live on.

We've all heard testimonies from people who tithed and were blessed. But that's not giving, it's **investing**, because we're paying to get something in return. And do we really think God withholds blessings because we didn't fork over 10% of our gross pay to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization? Giving must be free and voluntary, from the heart and not the calculator. The principle behind it all is in Col. 3:17: Whatever we do, it should be with pure motives, to honor God.

We need to clarify a passage that's frequently mistranslated: 1 Cor. 16:1. The Greek phrase there is not "the first day of every week" but "the First of Sabbaths". This referred to the first Sunday in the Feast of Weeks, as indicated in

verse 8 when the last Sunday, Pentecost, is mentioned. It was a one-time collection for the people suffering famine in Jerusalem, not a regular skimming of everyone's salary or wages. Tithes were always on **increase**, meaning profit, which was from the yield of crops and herds.

## Conclusion

We often say that our faith is not a religion but a relationship. Yet by our actions we say that it is indeed a religion. We ignore Gal. 4:10-11 and Col. 2:16-17 which specifically reject any sort of liturgical calendar or religious rites, we put up buildings with a "sanctuary" and altar (?!), and we usually require memberships for those already a part of the Body of Christ by virtue of faith in the risen Jesus. The tune and the lyrics need to match.

## Can Christians Eat Meat?

Some claim that the Bible says it's a sin to eat meat. Here is one example:

Jesus didn't feed people fish in [sic] the ancient text. FISH is actually Fishweed (Seaweed) . The fatted calf was also changed. The original text says throw a feast. ([video](#))

In John 21:1-14, after Jesus' resurrection, were Peter and the others fishing for seaweed? Did Jesus roast seaweed over fire after telling the disciples to "catch" a boatload of it? Keep in mind that "the ancient text" is fairly well-established ([source](#)), such that any claims about what it contains must be backed by sound scholarship. Now let's check the original languages for the particular words in dispute:

- [G2486 fish](#), seen in texts from Homer forward. There are no credible references to fishweed in the Bible, and the only reference to seaweed is when Jonah was sinking into the sea and it wrapped around his head. Jonah 2:5 uses the Hebrew word [H5488 reed](#), but the Greek only says "head went down to the depths", so there is no Greek word for seaweed or fishweed in the Bible. The Greek word for seaweed bears no resemblance to, or connection with, the word for fish. So it's completely disingenuous to use the **English**

words “fish” and “fishweed” to argue that the original text wasn’t talking about fish. (For the curious: definitions of [fishweed](#) and [pondweed](#))

- [H7716 lamb](#), from a root meaning “pushing out to graze”; does that sound like “throw a feast”? And what did a feast include? Look at the required eating of meat for the Passover feast as stated in Ex. 12:1-8:
  - vs. 5 the lamb or goat must be a year-old male
  - vs. 6 kill it around sundown
  - vs. 7 take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes
  - vs. 8 eat the meat roasted over fire

Another source is [this website](#) about SDA dietary laws, but it can’t seem to make up its mind about eating meat. At the top it says “No meats are allowed in their diets, including beef, chicken, fish and wild game.” But under Other Foods it says “While the religion advocates vegetarianism, followers do have the choice of eating meat if they choose to.” And of course what they forbid for themselves is hardly what God forbids for everyone. They make no effort beyond “cause no harm” to assert that it’s a sin to eat meat.

Going back to the first source, and any others claiming eating meat is a sin, you’ll notice that the claim **begins with a change of words**. But what the Bible’s content **should be** has to be settled before its teachings can be studied or debated. So this study is about **what the Bible says**, not what some think it should or allegedly used to say, and **only on the matter of eating meat** rather than any and all killing of animals. There will be no disputing the words of the Bible in the original languages, or speculation on what might be “missing”. And there will be no hand-wave dismissal of the text by calling everything an allegory or code, since such an approach reduces Bible study or debate to a war of personal opinions. Now take note of the important points in this claim:

1. **The Bible says** The principles of good reading comprehension apply to the Bible, meaning context and language are crucial to understanding. We can avoid complications arising from translation issues by consulting original language interlinears and lexicons, and we’ll get to the matter of semantic range later. When a claim is made that the Bible **teaches** or **commands** something, it can’t be left up to inference or assumption. It must be explicit or at

least included in a general command, and there must be penalties stipulated for disobedience.

2. **It's a sin** Sin is rebellion against God. If God commands a person or group **not** to do something, or that they **must** do something, and they fail to obey the command, that is sin.
3. **To eat meat** Meat in the Bible refers to the muscles of animals. Numbers 11:4-5 shows that fish was included, and that meat was clearly distinguished from fruits and vegetables.

So to back up the assertion that (1) **the Bible says** (2) **it's a sin** (3) **to eat meat**, we must look in the Bible as it is, find at least a general principle about eating meat, and cite the penalty for failure to comply. The Bible not only **permits** eating meat, but **sometimes commands** it.

## Jews and Gentiles

The 10 Commandments are part of 613 laws and precepts in a covenant between God and Israel, as also stated in the New Testament; see Ex. 34:27, Eph. 2:12, and Rom. 2:14. So who is in the covenant? Who is **not** in the covenant?

If appeal is made to the 10 Commandments, esp. #6 “thou shalt not kill”, then we need to consider **all** the laws of Moses about food, since if we're not under those laws then **none** of them can be used to call eating meat a sin. It's impossible to only be under **some** laws: see James 2:10 and Heb. 7:12.

**Moral law** comes from God, and the laws of Moses are only **one expression** of that law. So for us in the Body of Christ, being under a new priesthood, we're under a new law; see Rom. 6:14, 7:1-4, 1 Cor. 9:20-21, Gal. 2:16, 21, 3:2-3, 6:2, and Phil. 3:9.

Now since we're “not under law but under grace”, no appeal can be made to **any** of the laws of Moses. Even if we were under those laws, and “kill” in the 6th Commandment included animals, notice that **nothing** is said about **eating**. But please look at this word “kill” in both [Hebrew](#) and [Greek](#), which is found in both Ex. 20:13 and Deut. 5:17.

Not one of those definitions, or any context in the Bible, equates the killing of animals with murder. Semantic range (range of meanings) doesn't mean we can arbitrarily pick the meaning we want; context is everything. For example, take the word *trunk*: Is it an elephant's nose, the base of tree, a human torso, male swimwear, a box with a lid, or the back compartment of a car? It would be nonsense to substitute "elephant's nose" and "base of tree" in the sentence "Put the trunk in the trunk". Likewise, **we can't arbitrarily insert "put any living thing to death" in the 6th Commandment.**

As for the claim made by some that we can only eat animals we didn't kill, consider Deut. 14:21. Was it a sin for the foreigners to eat meat? Clearly not. And remember what Jesus said in Mat. 15:11.

Romans 2:14 tells us that the Gentiles were not part of the covenant, but had a law on their hearts nonetheless. Did they rest on the Sabbath, or eat only kosher food, or refrain from wearing mixed fabrics? Of course not, because the law on their hearts is the **conscience**, not the laws of Moses; see Heb. 7:12, 8:8, and 8:13.

The Bible is quite clear that we're not under the laws of Moses, so there can be no appeal to the 6th commandment in defense of the claim that it's a sin to eat meat. But what about New Testament commands such as in Rom. 13:10? Killing is wrong or harm, right? Jesus himself defined "neighbor" in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 as a person in need of help and compassion, and in Mat. 12:11 he states that this applies to animals as well. So clearly it's against God's moral law to **cause suffering** or fail to alleviate it when possible.

Then we must ask whether killing an animal causes the animal suffering. In the case of murdering a person, even if the killing was quick and painless, the harm is done to the sanctity of human life and the family of the victim. In contrast, the quick and humane killing of an animal doesn't cause suffering. In fact, allowing animals to be eaten is given by God as a **blessing** for all mankind in Gen. 9:1-6. So "love does no harm to its neighbor" does not mean animals can't be killed for food.

The Bible teaches Christians to be flexible about eating meat as shown in Rom. 14:1-4 and 10. Another question also arose over whether meat offered to idols should be eaten, per 1 Cor. chapters 8 and 10, but the question was never whether **any and all** meat was forbidden, only the **source or use** of it. Remember also that innocent animals dying for humans began when sin did, even before animals could be eaten, per Gen. 3:21. **Why** God did that is a discussion of its own, but for now, see [this list](#) for other references about eating meat outside of Jewish law.

## Conclusion

The Bible makes it clear that it's not a sin to eat meat, and it's neither commanded nor forbidden for Christians. Certainly we'll eventually stop eating it, because death will be no more. But in the meantime, God leaves it up to individual conscience, and the only sin would be to violate that conscience. So making a law that we must not eat meat, or even trying to shame people about it, is the real sin. As Jesus said in Mat. 24:45-51, when he returns he'd better not find us beating our fellow servants.

We're free in Christ— not to harm or control each other, but to build each other up. There's room for conscience and disagreement, and with that must come room for grace, tolerance, and compassion. We need to agree on the essentials of the Gospel of Grace, and if we think someone's in error, we should speak to them privately as a friend and an equal, rather than setting up debates. As the saying goes, Debate is for de fish.

## The Body of Christ

The term “the Body of Christ” is used in 1 Cor. 12:27, Eph. 4:12 and 15, and Col. 1:24 to refer to all followers of Jesus. We are his body in the sense that we act on his behalf in this world, representing and modeling him. But we can't know how to do that without studying the scriptures, which paint a much different picture of the community of believers than tradition has presented.

## The original, healthy Body

Take a moment to read Mat. 20:25-28, Acts 2:17-18, Acts 2:42-46, Acts 4:32, Acts 20:17, and Acts 20:28-30. Those all tell us that this Body was never meant to resemble or function like the world with its chains of command and levels of authority. Everyone adopted by God through trust in the Jesus who rose from the dead is equal in worth and practice; there are no cardboard crowns to wear, no entitlements, no positions to defend. Unlike all religions before that time, the Body had no sacred buildings, artifacts, calendars, liturgies, or ranks of power. People just met together in each others' homes for meals, instruction, and worship. Because of that, since they weren't segregated from the general public, everyone could see what a close-knit family this was, and how God really wanted us to live.

The elders were nothing like the traditional corporate structure with its CEO (head/lead pastor or priest), board of directors (assistant pastors, bishops, etc.), managers (deacons), and workers (lay persons); a Body isn't described in such terms. Rather, we are all parts working together in our unique ways (1 Cor. 12:4-30), a Body with only one Head. All parts have direct access to the Head without going through a chain of command, as if the foot needs the elbow to intercede for it.

These elders had no special office or function above others; they were not required to officiate over fellowship, baptisms, weddings, funerals, or discipline. You'll notice in 1 Cor. 5 that it was the entire community of believers, not just a board of elders or chief elder (which didn't exist anyway), who was charged with administering discipline against a believer living in sin.

But what were the elders, then? They were protectors and mentors, examples of maturity and teachers of scripture, and there was a group of them for each congregation. The last reference in the list above bears this out via a warning: After the Apostles all passed away, false teachers would rise up from among them and ravage the community of believers with false teachings and lust for authority.

## **The injured, sickly Body**

The community of believers (Christianity) lost its way early in the second century AD as the Apostles predicted. The seeds of worldly systems were planted, and they grew quickly into organizations rather than remaining as one organism (the Body). Even before the Roman empire in the fourth century shifted from oppression to infiltration of the community of believers, local power grabs were in motion and the Body was divided. Artificial parts were added (authorities), others were hobbled (women, minorities), and in this way relationship was replaced by religion.

In fact, much of the New Testament in the form of letters (epistles) was written in order to confront and correct false teachings and practices. Take a look at these passages: 2 Cor. 2:5-8, 1 Cor. 6:1-8, 1 Cor. 11:11-12, 1 Cor. 12:14-27, 1 Cor. 14:26-40, 2 Cor. 4:7, 2 Cor. 6:14,17, 2 Cor. 8:12-15, Gal. 3:28, Eph. 4:32, and Php. 2:1-5.

## **The restored, healed Body**

In these passages you will find instructions on how to treat and heal the Body to its original design: 1 Tim. 3:1-13, 5:1-22, 6 (all), Titus 1:5-9, 2 (all), and 1 Peter 5:1-5. Heb. 13:7 and 17 are often mistranslated and misinterpreted as to mean obedience to human authorities in the Body, but the original Greek does not support such a thing. Verse 7 refers to those who had first brought the Good News as examples to imitate, while verse 17 refers to guides whose wise advice should be heeded, because their experience and grasp of the scriptures protect others.

## **Conclusion**

We are a Body of equal but distinct parts, distinguished not by our flesh or social standing (Gal. 3:28) but by the gifting of the Holy Spirit. Our purpose is not to “practice religion” but to model the ideal community and show the world what it means to be reconciled with our Creator. If we are to own buildings, they should be facilities for caring for each other: apartments, service

centers, clinics, childcare, job training, etc. We cannot **go** to church, because we **are** the church.

## Marriage

### Introduction

Most people would be shocked to learn that the Bible never specifies what marriage is, beyond the physical union of a man and woman. There are no instructions on any kind of official ceremony, presiding official, legal certificate, or even witnesses. All of those things come from cultural traditions. But such traditions were already in place by the time scripture was written, and as God's habit has been, he worked through, in, and around them. This meant that marriage was seen also as a contract, and violation of the terms means the contract is void.

Marriage and divorce have always been controversial topics, but we must be careful to understand the Biblical context. For example, when Jesus was asked about divorce (Mt. 5:31-32, 19:3), there was much more to the question than meets the eye. About the time of Jesus' birth, a new type of divorce called the [Any Cause divorce](#) was invented (today we would say "no-fault divorce"). The phrase in Deut. 24:1 ("a cause of sexual immorality") originally only meant unfaithfulness, but a legal loophole was created by dividing it up into two separate grounds for divorce: sexual immorality and "a cause".

A rabbi called Hillel argued: Why did God use the phrase "cause of sexual immorality" when he could merely have said "sexual immorality"? The phrase "a cause" must refer to something else, which he decided meant "any (or no) reason at all." But the disciples of Shammai disagreed; the whole phrase meant exactly what it said: "nothing but unfaithfulness". Of course, if God had meant "any or no cause", then all other similar laws were redundant too, but the rabbis only tried to split hairs on this one.

So what Jesus was being asked was very specific: Was the Any Cause divorce interpretation legitimate? His answer was clearly No. But at the same time,

neither was Jesus making a statement that meant divorce had no legitimate grounds except for marital unfaithfulness. If we study the entirety of the law we see that it also included various forms of neglect as well (Ex. 21:10-11). Jesus was not giving an all-encompassing teaching on the topic, but rather a specific answer to the question of no-fault divorce. To apply it indiscriminately to every marriage for all time is to twist Jesus' words.

## Christian Marriage

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, included more detail than what was recorded in the Gospels. In 1 Cor. 7 he taught that spouses owed each other both physical love (vs. 3-5) and material support (vs. 33-34), and in vs.10-16 he addressed more specific situations that can cause marital discord. The first (vs. 10-11) seems to be aimed at a particular woman wanting to separate, but the second seems to be a couple where one became saved after marriage. In vs. 15 Paul first gives an over-arching principle: **The most important thing in marriage is to live in peace.** People tend to take Paul's meaning here backwards. He's not saying couples should force themselves to stay together in the hope that the other spouse will be saved, but that we **don't know whether the spouse will ever be saved.** He wants people to show mercy to unbelievers who want to leave, and not make a couple already divorced in relationship to stay married in only a legal sense.

Some take Paul's statements in vs. 25-35 as being about specific and strict rules on marriage— in spite of what he just finished saying. They also try to use it to justify the custom of parents choosing spouses for their children, as if it were an eternal command. This section is simply an elaboration on the earlier statements about the pressures married people face and is really very simple. Paul repeats that people should carefully consider whether to get married, and if they decide to do so, they should follow his guidelines, as he says in vs. 35.

In vs. 36-40 Paul appears to be addressing specific situations there in Corinth, the first being a man who isn't sure whether he should marry, and the second being a woman whose husband is apparently near death. She needed to know what she should do in that case, especially if she were Jewish and would oth-

erwise be obligated to marry a brother of her husband in order to produce heirs. Paul says that Christian women are not obligated to honor this law, especially if it would mean having to marry an unbeliever.

## Summary

God intended from the beginning that marriage would be between one man and one woman for life (Mat. 19:6). But sin made concessions necessary, because God is merciful and wants us to live in peace. Even in cases such as slavery and divorce, God mandates compassion and opposes neglect and abuse (Mal. 2:14-16, 1 Pet. 3:7, Eph. 5:25). The Christian community should encourage and support lifelong commitment, but also recognize when compassion must overrule legalism. Individual self-discipline and self-sacrifice, and other qualities of mature Christian adults, would go a long way toward making divorce a rare thing among us.

## Christian Women

*“When you’re accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression.”*

When the question is raised about the “role” of women in the Christian faith, it already assumes that all women are fundamentally, intrinsically, and spiritually restricted in some way, and the only real question is not **whether** but **how much**. This is based on cherry-picked scripture at best, and social presumption above all. What we need to do instead is to objectively study all scriptural depictions of women in context, which must include how God deals with people in general.

## God’s ways are not our ways

The practice of reading later culture and traditions into past writings is called an *anachronistic fallacy*. One example is when the Early Modern English word *science*, which only meant general knowledge at the time, is interpreted with the modern meaning of a specific subset of knowledge involving experi-

mentation. This is a huge problem in Bible interpretation (hermeneutics), especially in the early chapters of Genesis, particularly chapter 3.

What God originally created was “very good”, but sin brought lasting corruption. Before sin there was no hierarchy between Adam and Eve, and the hierarchy that followed sin was not God’s command but rather his prediction of the result of Eve’s choice to follow the man rather than God. The long path from fall to redemption would require divine intervention at times, beginning with the Great Flood. Only then do we see God institute rudimentary human government, whose purpose was to slow the spread of sin and encourage people to seek him out (see Acts 17:26-27).

The rest of the Bible shows that whenever God does intervene, he goes against social norms (ref. 1 Cor. 1:27-29): the second- or last-born over the first, the lowly over the prominent, the weak over the strong. On the other hand, God doesn’t suddenly and drastically disrupt human society and its cultural traditions. The laws God gave to Israel through Moses set boundaries to ensure the humane treatment of slaves, women, children, and foreigners, yet this hardly means God endorsed slavery (1 Cor. 7:21), fleshly privilege (Gal. 3:28), or abuse and neglect (Ex. 22:27, Eph. 4:32).

God does not change, which we need to remember when we read passages such as 1 Sam. 16:7 or Acts 10:34. Jesus taught and showed by example how his followers must regard each other. In Mat. 20:24-28, Mark 10:45, Luke 9:46-48, Luke 22:24-27, John 13:3-8, Eph. 5:21, and Phil. 2:5-11, we see that the attitude and character of every follower of Jesus (especially those who influence or lead others) should be humble service rather than a jealous grasping for power or authority.

Knowing all this, how can any follower of Jesus desire, claim, or exercise the very “lording over” scripture so clearly denounces? Whether it’s done by pastors or patriarchalists, it violates the clear, overarching principles of how we are to view and treat each other. We must bend our ways to God’s ways, not upend God’s ways to fit our ways. Our flesh is irrelevant in the Body of Christ, and none of us has authority to wield over others. So no passage of scripture can possibly say the opposite or excuse it in some situations. Rather,

the **appearance** of some passages to contradict the clear teachings is due to our own prejudice or misunderstanding. If any interpretation causes us to restrict fellow believers for any other reason than living in sin or teaching division (of which flesh-based entitlement is one example), it is false by definition. So the debate over whether women can exercise authority is dissolved by the fact that **no one** but Jesus and the Apostles in scripture has spiritual authority or entitlement.

## Women in the Old Testament

Consider how godly women are presented in the pages of the Old Testament beginning with Eve. While God said “because of you and what you did” to Adam and the serpent, no such words were spoken to Eve, who was the **victim** of deception. God actually blessed her by promising the Savior through her “seed” alone. Other notable women include:

- **Sarah**— whose child Isaac would be heir to the Promise to Abraham (Gen. 21:12)
- **Miriam**— the older sister of Moses and a prophet (Ex. 15:20, Micah 6:4)
- **Shiphrah and Puah**— the Hebrew midwives who defied the infanticide command of Pharaoh (and lied when confronted!) and were blessed by God for their bravery (Ex. 1:15-21)
- **Deborah**— a prophet and leader/judge of Israel (Judges 4:1-10)
- **Jael**— the woman credited with killing the enemy king Sisera by driving a tent peg through his temples (Judges 4:18-22)
- **Abigail**— the wise, brave, and intelligent woman who saved her clan from extinction (1 Sam. 25:3, 14-34)
- **Esther**— the captive who was made queen in Babylon, whose bravery and wisdom saved all Israel from extinction (book of Esther)
- **Huldah**— a prophet in Jerusalem who was consulted about the rediscovered Book of the Law (2 Kings 22:14-20, 2 Chron. 34: 22-28)
- **ideal**— wise, respected, diligent, hard-working, business owner (Prov. 31:10-31)

None of these women are presented in scripture as God's last resort, or a punishment or shame for disobedience on the part of men (see next paragraph). None are reprimanded for stepping outside of social norms. None of the credit for their achievements is given to their fathers or husbands. All are presented as noble role models; this is the only "role" scripture gives them.

The one, and **only** one, passage that allegedly speaks of the "shame of women as leaders" is Isaiah 3:12. The Hebrew (Masoretic) text is translated as "Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. My people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path.". The intentional error of this rendering was exposed long ago by scholar Dr. Katharine Bushnell, but her work has largely been ignored. [Here](#) is her examination of the issue (lessons 621 and 622):

621. I think we find another case of prejudiced translation in Isaiah 3:12. The word translated *children* in this verse in Isaiah, is a plural masculine participle of the verb "to glean, abuse, practice." It is translated *glean* in Leviticus 19:10, Deuteronomy 24:21, Judges 20:45, and Jeremiah 6:9. **The word has no translation such as *children* anywhere else in the Bible**, and it occurs 21 times. Another word altogether is used for *children*, and *child*, in verses 4 and 5 of this same chapter; the sense seems to have been fixed by the supposed context, to correspond with *women*.

As to the word translated *women*: Two words, without the rabbinical vowel points, are exactly alike. One is pronounced *nosh-im* and the other *na-shim*. In appearance the only difference is a slight mark under the first letter of the Hebrew word *na-shim*. The first word means *exactors*; the one with a vowel mark under the initial letter means *women*. The entire decision, therefore, as to whether the word means one or the other depends upon OPTION. Those who pointed the word, evidently thought the nation could sink no lower than to pass under women rulers, and then translated the word *children* to match it. Commentators frequently call attention to the alternate reading. See Adam Clarke on the passage. The Septuagint translates: "As for my people, tax-gatherers (*praktors*) glean them, and exactors (*apaitountes*) rule over them."

622. There seems little in the context to support the translation *children* and *women*. But study the context as regards the other reading. After complaining of the gleaners, (that is, tax-gatherers) and extortioners, they are threatened in the following language: “The Lord standeth up to plead and standeth up to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with the elders of His people, and the princes (rulers, masculine, not feminine gender) thereof for ye have eaten up the vineyard (the conduct of extortionate tax-gatherers), and the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye crush (R. V.) my people, and grind the faces of the poor?” Because of this context, we believe that **OPTION** took the wrong turn when it decided to translate this verse as it stands in our English version; and that this translation would have had a strong showing up of its sophistries, had educated women been on the last Revision Committee. (emphasis mine)

## Women in the New Testament

Since it has been established that scripture does not present **God** as the one shaming or placing restrictions on women, then who would believe that **this same God** would command or even imply that women followers of Jesus should be more restricted or shamed than their Old Testament sisters? Or that God would begin to show favoritism, or break his long-standing habit of going against social norms, which as the next section will show, have been overwhelmingly patriarchal throughout history? There is no flesh-based entitlement, no exception, no fine print under Jesus’ command, “Not so with you; whoever would be the greatest must be the least.” Look at some notable women as the New Testament presents them:

- **Mary**— the woman blessed with giving birth to the incarnate Christ (Mat. 1:16)
- **Anna**— the prophet stationed at the temple who prophesied about Jesus (Luke 2:36-38)
- **the unnamed woman** — anointed Jesus before his death (Mat. 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9)

- **Mary of Bethany**— sister of Martha and Lazarus, who sat at Jesus’ feet to learn as any rabbinical student would (another possible reason for her sister’s reaction), and who also anointed Jesus before his death (Luke 10:38-42, John 12:2-8)
- **Mary Magdalene**— traveling companion and financial supporter of Jesus, and witness to his death, burial, and resurrection (Mat. 27:55-56, 28:1, etc.; Mark 16:1, Luke 8:2-3)
- **the Samaritan woman**— debated Jesus about worship, then testified to others that he could be the Messiah (John 4:7-26)
- **the Canaanite woman**— debated Jesus (and won!) on whether exceptions could be made for helping non-Israelites (Mat. 15:22-28)
- **the bleeding woman**— had the faith to believe she would be healed if she touched the hem of Jesus’ garment (Luke 8:43-48)
- **Lydia**— homeowner who ran a business selling fine fabrics internationally (Acts 16:14)
- **Phoebe**— minister of the church in Cenchrrea, presiding officer who also came to Paul’s aid (Rom. 16:1-2)
- **Junia**— outstanding Apostle and co-prisoner with Paul (Rom. 16:7)
- **Priscilla**— scripture teacher, church leader, co-worker of Paul (Acts 18:26, Rom. 16:3, 1 Cor. 16:19)
- **Chloe**— church leader whose letter Paul responded to as 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:11)

In all of Jesus’ interactions with women, not once did he shun them, shame them, or treat them as inferior. Not even the Apostle Paul, formerly a top Pharisee, treated women as inferior; in fact, he praised quite a few as co-workers, leaders, even apostles. Are we to believe, as some teach, that both Jesus and Paul contradicted themselves by also ordering that women treat their husbands as they would the Lord, that women must not utter a word in a “worship service” (while also saying how they can prophesy!), that women cannot be apostles, ministers, teachers, or leaders of any sort? Do we see any hint in scripture that women lack the ability, permission, or gifting to serve as fully equal members of the Body of Christ, or as spouses? The scriptural answer is a resounding **no**.

## Women in secular history

Just looking at one topic, science, we see in [this article](#) how women have often been snubbed, marginalized, dismissed, and outright robbed of the credit due them for their accomplishments:

- **Rosalind Franklin**— British biophysicist (PhD in Physics in 1945) who developed ways to image DNA and provided critical data to Crick and Watson, eventual winners of the Nobel Prize; she was never credited for her work
- **Jocelyn Bell Burnell**— discovered pulsars in 1967 via a radio-telescope she helped assemble, but recognition went instead to her male supervisor
- **Esther Lederberg**— microbiologist who in 1951 discovered a virus that infects bacteria, but was never credited with it
- **Chien-Shiung Wu**— experimental physicist who was part of the Manhattan Project in the 1940s; her work eventually led to a Nobel Prize in physics— for two male colleagues
- **Lise Meitner**— her work led to the discovery of nuclear fission, but she was not listed as co-author of her findings with a male colleague
- **Nettie Stevens**— performed studies crucial to understanding that chromosomes, not environment, determine the sex of offspring; credit for the discovery went instead to a man

Space does not permit the listing of all the women on this and other topics who have been denied justice **solely because they were women**, not the common competition of rivals. This hardly means that men never suffer injustice; rather, it means that women have suffered **additional** injustice for no other reason than their flesh.

## Rebuttals to Common Arguments

1. **Adam ruled Eve because he was made first.** If being first means having authority, then the animals all had authority over Adam. If being last means having authority, then Eve had authority over Adam. It is the fallacy of “special pleading” to make creation order a basis for authority only in one case.
2. **Adam ruled Eve because she was made from him.** Adam was made from dust. Is dust therefore superior to Adam? Instead, being made of the very

same “flesh and bone” as Adam made Eve his absolute equal. Adam focused on Eve’s similarity, not her difference.

3. **Adam ruled Eve because she was his helper.** The Hebrew word for “help” means “a strong ally” and is also used of God. There is no hint of inferiority on the part of the helper; in fact, it is the one being helped that lacks strength or ability. (Gen. 2:18)
4. **Adam ruled Eve because he called her “woman”.** The slave woman Hagar gave God a name. (Gen. 2:23, 16:13)
5. **Eve lusted after Adam’s authority before she was tempted.** There is not one hint in the entire Bible to back up this claim; it is a man-made myth. There is no scripture between the creation of Eve and her temptation, and neither she nor the serpent mentioned Adam during or after the temptation. No NT writer even hints at such a thing.
6. **Adam was unaware of the temptation or the source of the fruit.** He was there with her and heard her voice as she was tempted. When she handed him the fruit he ate it even though he knew where it came from. If Eve had been tempting or tricking Adam, then it was she and not the serpent who was the real deceiver, making Adam the deceived. And there is not the slightest hint anywhere in the Bible of Eve using “feminine wiles” to seduce Adam. (Gen. 3:6, 17, 1 Tim. 2:13)
7. **Adam is shown to rule over Eve since God confronts him first.** The confrontation is in the order of a typical philosophical argument, where statements are made leading to a central point and then traced back in reverse order. Scripture shows this to be man– woman– serpent– woman– man. So the order has nothing to do with rule but only with making a point. And the point was the serpent’s curse and the accompanying prophecy of a Savior through the woman’s seed alone. Eve is thus honored with truly being the “help” that Adam needed.
8. **Adam is charged with bringing sin into the world because he was the “federal head” of the human race.** Scripture never gives Adam this title or anything like it, and does not say why sin is attributed to him alone. Yet consider these facts: both he and Eve ate the fruit and thus became mortal, but only Adam blamed the woman and God for his sin. While Eve is only said to have been deceived, Adam is said to have rebelled against God and dealt treacherously with Him. And if they base this “federal head” belief on the statement in Hebrews about Levi being credited with giving a tithe since he

was “still in the body of his ancestor” Abraham when Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, they need to answer the question of why **any** of Abraham’s descendants needed to tithe, or how Levi could literally have existed in Abraham when a person is not created till sperm meets egg. Also, if Adam was Eve’s “federal head” before sin, then God would not have confronted her at all but only Adam. (Hosea 6:7, Job 31:33, Heb. 7:10)

9. **Adam’s rule over Eve was made harsh after sin.** There is no hint of Adam having authority over Eve before sin, and God never told Adam he must now rule better or more strongly. In addition, the statement was made to Eve, and it was not a command but a prediction of the consequences of her choice to follow Adam out of the garden. Only Adam was ordered out, and only Adam was told he would return to the dust from which he alone was taken, which God cursed on his account alone. Neither he nor Eve were ever cursed. (Gen. 3:19-24)
10. **Eve was cursed with labor pain and subservience to Adam.** The verse about pain in childbirth is more accurately rendered “a snare has increased your sorrow and sighing; in sorrow you will bear children, and your turning will be to your husband, who will rule over you.” Note that she was indeed snared or tricked, and also that it would be **her husband**, not anything he allegedly possessed, that she would desire or turn toward. And because of this she would be ruled over by him. This was in the future tense for both her desire and his rule, proving that neither previously existed. Even in the traditional rendering, the word “curse” is not used with Eve as it was with Adam and the serpent; God never told Eve “Because you have done this...”. And how could God **increase** her labor pains if she had not yet given birth? Even if she had, was birth supposed to have pain before sin? (Gen. 3:16)
11. **Adam was given rule over Eve because she was deceived.** This makes no sense whatsoever. Adam sinned deliberately and without excuse, and showed no concern or responsibility for Eve while she was being tempted. If Eve had been made by God with a deceivable nature, how could she have been “a suitable helper” for Adam? And if all women are to be labeled as deceivable, then all men are to be labeled as poor leaders and rebels against God who always pass blame. And if Adam was tempted by Eve, would that not make him the weaker of the two, and all men share his weakness? To think God rewarded Adam for his rebellion and inaction, and cursed Eve for being tricked, is to turn God into Satan. And again, God never granted this rule to Adam; it was a prediction to Eve concerning the choice she would make. We

must also not forget that the Savior was promised through her seed alone. Would God send His Son through the inherently deceivable? Why did He have to be born of a virgin?

12. **God never used women as leaders unless there were no men available.** None of the references to women in leadership are ever said to be God's last resort or evidence of a divine curse or punishment. The lone verse that allegedly says so is very badly translated; even if it weren't, one verse is hardly enough to overturn the unchanging basics of the faith such as the Golden Rule and "not so among you". (Ex. 15:20, Judges 4:4-5:12, 2 Kings 22:14, 2 Chronicles 34:22, Isaiah 3:12)
13. **God never condemned patriarchy.** He also never condemned polygamy, slavery, rape, pedophilia, and a lot of other things. He never intended for Israel to have a human king but gave them one because they nagged him. We see throughout scripture God's pattern of making concessions, of working through and around humanity instead of immediately condemning every sin or weakness. Whenever God did intervene, we observe that He chose the young over the old, the weak over the strong, and the small and insignificant over the great and powerful. We also see His compassion and mercy, His offer to "come and reason". So His silence is not an indicator of approval but of patience and mercy. (1 Sam. 6:6-9)
14. **Jesus was male, and all his inner group of disciples were male.** Jesus, as well as the disciples, were also all Jews, all speaking Aramaic. Why aren't these other qualities cited as proof that Christian leaders must be Jewish and speak Aramaic? And why was only Judas ever replaced among the Twelve? Why isn't a group of twelve required in every church? There is also proof that the Twelve were to be mapped to the twelve tribes of Israel, not to any sort of church structure. (Rev. 21:12-14)
15. **Jesus never condemned male supremacy.** As with the claim about patriarchy, there were many other things Jesus never spoke out against, not even the Roman government. He also did not rebuke Mary for sitting at His feet to learn, and if male supremacists are consistent, they have to take that to mean Jesus approves of female theology students. And to be under a rabbi like that meant the student was expected to eventually take the place of a rabbi as well, so that means Jesus approves of women as pastors. Either arguments from silence are legitimate across the board, or they are not. (Luke 10:39)
16. **None of the Bible was written by a woman.** Who is the author of Hebrews? Some historians believe there is evidence of "a conspiracy of silence" be-

cause the author was a woman, most likely Priscilla. Who wrote Esther? Ruth? We should also note that none of the Bible was written by a Gentile or a sea captain or a court jester. How many women were taught to write? How many should we expect from a patriarchal society? Does God ever say why He does things like commending the bravery of a prostitute (or possibly, an inn keeper, which in patriarchal thinking is a greater sin than prostitution since she ran a business without male oversight!) and allowing the Savior to be born of her line? So again we must ask why something like this is taken as tacit approval of male supremacy by God. (Joshua 6:25, Mt. 1:5)

17. **The “plain reading” of scripture says women can’t teach men.** That same “plain reading” also says that we should pluck out our eye if it causes us to sin, that we should take wine for our stomach problems, that we should wash each other’s feet, that we should greet each other with a holy kiss, that our only debt should be love, and that “the first will be last and the last will be first”. And if anyone tries to cry “context” in defense of their “plain reading” they have defeated their own argument. More questions for “plain reading” and consistency: Why does a woman need a head covering to signify male rule if she can only pray and prophecy in private or among other women? Where does God ever tell godly women they are in sin if they teach truth?
18. **Males must guard females from error and deception.** The Holy Spirit cannot do the job? Who is guarding all those men teaching error? How many women compared to men have started false religions? How many women have been popes or imams? How many men have fallen for tricksters and embezzlers? And where is the scripture that states men must guard women from deception? Why are women allowed to teach children, who are the most easily deceived?
19. **Men and women are equal in being but have complementary “roles” where the man leads and the woman follows.** If two people are equal in being or essence, there cannot be permanent hierarchy between them on the basis of essential qualities of being. That is, if someone is held to a permanent subservient role, based upon their flesh in some way, then that person is inferior by definition. Temporary hierarchies, such as employer/employee or parent/child, do not violate this rule because the employee can change jobs and the child can grow up. But slavery is defined as “submission to a dominating influence; the state of a person who is a chattel of another” (Webster’s). A slave can be freed but is at the mercy of the owner. Though the slave is acknowledged to be as fully human as the owner, the slave is nonetheless held

to be inferior in being. A “role” is, by definition, a part to play or a function to perform. The latter is held by male supremacism as meaning a woman’s role is to submit permanently to a man for no other reason than the flesh (the physical). Yet because it is based upon a permanent and intrinsic quality, it defines the woman as inferior to the man. It is held that this leader/follower relationship is “complementary” between equals, but this amounts to defining equal as unequal, since the woman can never outrank the man in return. Truly equal complementation would be between friends or co-workers who each have different skills or jobs, or like the cooperation between the left and right hands.

20. **The man is the head of the family.** Scripture never says this; it only says the husband is the head of his wife. But “head” in Greek never meant ruler or boss; the head/body metaphor was an expression of unity. If it meant boss, then the Bible would be ordering wives to “serve two masters”, especially since male supremacism insists that a wife is to obey her husband “as to the Lord”.
21. **No woman is ever addressed in scripture as a pastor.** No man is ever addressed in scripture as a pastor. No NT letter is ever addressed to an individual having a title— except 2 John, which is addressed to a woman he calls “the chosen master” (lit. Greek). Many are called “apostles” (lit. “sent out”), including Junia, and many are called “servants” or “ministers” (all from the Greek word **diaconos**), including Phoebe. And “pastor”, mentioned only once in the entire NT, is a spiritual gift, not an office or title. (Rom. 16:1, 7, Eph. 4:11)
22. **An elder must be a man.** By the method used to determine this, then an elder must also be married, have well-behaved children, and do a good job of protecting the home. This would disqualify Paul, Timothy, and many others. Paul’s list of qualities are exactly that: qualities of character, not matters of the flesh. And that same word for provide and protect in 1 Tim. 3:4, **proistemi**, is used of Phoebe. By this same method, the Great Commission would only be for men since it involves preaching the gospel, teaching, and baptizing. (Mt. 28:19-20, Rom. 16:2, 1 Tim. 3)
23. **A husband plays the role of Father to his wife’s role of Son.** That is blasphemy and idolatry, not to mention symbolic pedophilia. No believer is ever told to play God to another believer. The **only** passage used to teach this blasphemy (on the man’s part) and idolatry (on the woman’s part) is Eph. 5:22, but there is no verb there, because it goes with verse 21, not verse 23. In

Greek it reads like a list starting in vs. 19, describing the “filled with the Spirit” in vs. 18: speaking, singing, thanking, and supporting. All believers are to defer (Paul always uses other words when discussing submission to authority) to one another; there are no exceptions. The man as “head” to the wife is her source, and she is his support, just as the head feeds the body and the body supports the head. In spite of the Roman law that made her attached to her father for life (instead of her husband)\*, Paul tells Christian wives to be loyal to their “own” husbands. To say this as a matter of obedience would make no sense in a society where this was already presumed and encoded in law, and to treat any human as The Lord would be idolatrous. So Paul is not making “lording over” a new definition of submission. (\*The law was “marriage without hand”, designed to give abused wives a way out of a bad marriage. She remained the property of her father, who at any time could give her to another man. So Paul is saying something quite radically opposed to Roman law.)

24. **Christian Equality is a slippery slope to homosexuality.** Then male supremacy is a slippery slope to wife abuse, and clergy supremacy is a slippery slope to the cults. The “slippery slope” argument was raised to justify slavery in the pre-Civil War south, fearing the breakdown of society should slaves be freed and treated as equals. And historically (even today), homosexuality has been rampant in very patriarchal societies.
25. **Christian Equality bows to culture.** The overwhelming cultural and religious paradigm has been that of male supremacy, so it is patriarchy which bows to culture. That modern Western society has been a rare exception to the cultural tradition does not make Christianity’s acceptance of equality a case of bowing to culture, any more than the abolition of slavery was also bowing to culture.
26. **Men cannot give birth but they don’t complain about it, so women should not complain about what they cannot do either.** This is the “equivocation” fallacy, since it confuses ability with permission. Neither side believes women lack the ability to preach, teach, or lead. The absurdity of this argument is clear when we substitute the proper meanings for ‘can’: “Men lack the ability to give birth, so women should not complain about lack of permission to hold authority.”
27. **Not all men can have ecclesiastical authority, so they too must submit gladly to it.** But men are not barred from such positions **because they are men**, but because they lack gifting or credentials. Yet women are barred from

those positions **solely because they are women**, an intrinsic quality and thus a matter of 'being' or 'essence' rather than an ability or a role to play; women's gifting or ability is not even considered. And of course it is not **all** men who are denied authoritative positions, while it is **all** women who are denied. And in the home, **all** men are designated leaders and authorities over their wives, while **no** women are ever designated leaders and authorities over their husbands.

A concise definition of patriarchy (male entitlement): It's the belief that God can speak through an animal (Num. 22:28), a plant (Ex. 3:2), or a rock (Luke 19:40), but never a woman. See also [Female Supremacism: A Parody](#).

## Conclusion

Even with the worst possible interpretations of scripture, the Bible treats women far better than secular or religious communities have done. The Christian community needs to reject gender roles for Christian roles, flesh-based permission for spiritual gifting, and chains of command for mutual service. The truly humble don't fight for the last place in line or forbid others to join them there. Authority to teach or preach never lies with the speaker but with the indwelling Holy Spirit, who does not dispense gifts in pink and blue boxes (i.e. by the flesh). This renders moot the entire question of Christian women's **permission**.

Let us stop hobbling the Body of Christ, and start treating all fellow believers as equals, with humility and compassion. Only the proud fear equality, and such pride harms the Christian community and our witness to the world. Remember what Jesus warned in Mat. 19:30 and Mark 10:31: "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." A whole-Bible study on this topic can be read [here](#).

## Abusers and Excusers

Scripture tells us how to deal with problems in Christian communities, but its mandates are rarely followed. The community has remained silent for centuries about abuse of power, not only by the illegitimate clergy class but also

by many spouses. Yet the Christian community remains silent. As we can see in Mat. 23:8-12, Mark 10:35-45, and Luke 22:24-27, the command of Jesus is very clear: His followers must not pull rank over their brothers and sisters, and leaders must be role models and mentors rather than masters and rulers. While other chapters in this book give the details of how the Body of Christ is to function, this one focuses on finding ways to correct the failure to put those principles into practice.

## **Role Models**

In Heb. 5:11-6:12, the writer expresses deep disappointment over the lack of spiritual growth and maturity in the Christian community. After a reasonable length of time they should have seen progress beyond the basics and become leaders, but this was not the case, especially for the former Hebrews to whom the letter was written. They were putting themselves back under the laws of Moses, which effectively put Jesus back on the cross. Yet this problem persists to our day, even among Gentiles (see Hebrew Roots).

Yet not everyone is, or should be, a Christian leader, per James 3. In Heb. 13:7,16, and 17, believers are admonished to look first of all to those who brought them the Gospel and imitate their behavior. Then it advises that believers listen to their current leaders, not as masters but as examples, as those who have already demonstrated spiritual maturity and are held to a higher (not lower!) standard. This is likely due to their positions of influence, not authority. A leader or teacher must not be a novice or heretic, but a faithful guide and guardian against false teachings. Those who fail in this regard will face stronger consequences at the judgment. Every believer must “give an account”, but for leaders/teachers the judgment will be more strict.

## **The Standard and the Consequences**

We’re told very clearly in passages such as 2 Tim. 3:16 and Luke 17:3-4 that sin (determined by scriptural standards) must be rebuked, and that forgiveness is only to be given to those who heed the rebuke and repent. The common excuse for why we can’t obey this command is that we too are all sinners. Yet as is clearly taught in 1 Cor. 5, the backslidden, immature, sin-enabling believers

in Corinth were to publicly disfellowship one of their own, though all of them approved of the sin out of a twisted sense of inclusion and tolerance. This person was not merely struggling with sin, but openly wallowing in it; that's the reason it had to be quickly and decisively rebuked before it spread like gangrene. A related passage is 2 Tim. 2:17, where false teachers were named and shamed in order to prevent the spread of their falsehood.

We have more specific standards for leaders in passages such as 1 Tim. 3:1-13, 5:1-2, and 17-21, Titus 1:5-9 and 2:1-8, and 1 Peter 5:1-6. Influencers (elders, guardians, attendants) are not to be appointed until they have demonstrated maturity in faith and practice. Fellow believers are to treat each other with dignity and compassion, yet not at the expense of holiness or truth. We shouldn't be quick to condemn an elder, but neither should we excuse or protect them if they have taught falsehood or lived in sin. With "double honor" comes "double shame"; a guilty elder is to be publicly rebuked, without prejudice or excuse from a twisted desire for peace and unity. Victims must be protected. When these commands are disobeyed, we get false teachers and rampant abuse, such as seen in this example:

Voddie Baucham has stated that **abused women have no recourse for divorce**. Instead, their job is to submit better to their husbands that they might empower him [**enable more abuse!**] to be more Christ-like in his leadership, and that the body of Christ might be unified. Further, Baucham **opposes the education of women**, holding that for them to go to college is a sin in defiance of biblical teaching. Lastly, he holds that **a woman is the property** of her father until such a time as he can arrange a marriage for her, regardless of her own consent or will, and transfer her to her husband. In such a case, the virginity of that daughter is a prize which enforces the honor of her father, a prize which is transferred into the ownership of the man she will marry. This is troubling, [since] the number one way to perpetuate sexual and domestic abuse of women is to deny them education and the freedom of self-determination. The ideas Baucham represents are a bastardization of Scripture designed entirely to preserve male privilege and suppress women while masquerading as "Christian". ([source](#), **emphases** and [insertions] added)

This is overt slavery. But even when the abuse is non-physical, we cannot and dare not ignore the mandate of scripture to **immediately** protect the victims. On a daily basis, in churches and social media, believers are routinely abused twice; first by the abusers, then by the silence of others, often compounded when the victim is rebuked for rightly demanding accountability, or for not automatically forgiving the unrepentant abuser. Never do such people give the victim the same automatic forgiveness— though of course the victim has not sinned, since refusing to forgive the unrepentant is what scripture commands. They demand that the victim walk around bleeding without complaint, while the abuser continues with the full tacit support of the community, which prays not for the victim but for the abuser.

Do we even need to ask what the consequences will be for abusers and their excusers? If we fear God as the great Judge, those who have abused or enabled abuse should be very, very afraid.

## Conclusion

We as the Christian community are tasked with **dealing with problems** and not only praying for people. We have Spirit-given gifts for a reason; we are the hands of Jesus in this world. If all we ever need to do is pray for abusers, there'd be no mandates in scripture for standards and disfellowships, rebukes and corrections— as if criminals should only be prayed for and never arrested, much less put on trial or convicted. If we wouldn't want a society where we let criminals run free and just pray that they'll stop, then of all people the Christian community should be an example to the world of how much we care for the oppressed. To fail is to have their blood on our hands.

## Christians and Government

Governments and national boundaries exist by the command of God, per Acts 17:26-27 (“...[God] marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands... so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him”) and Dan. 2:21 (“...He deposes kings and raises up others...”). But does God really ordain every government ruler, from the decent

to the despotic? Does this apply only to the figurehead or to every office at every level? Are Christians ever allowed to defy the state, and if so, how does this not violate Rom. 13:1-7?

## The Questions

Let's begin by looking at the Romans passage to establish which authorities are in view. Some believe it refers to church leaders, but unless one spiritualizes the part about carrying weapons, this cannot be the case. Neither are church leaders to be feared as agents of God's wrath against their fellow believers, since the church is not appointed to wrath (1 Thes. 5:9) and church leaders do not carry authority.

We do have an example of the disciples defying Israel's government (the Sanhedrin) in Acts 5:29, so there is precedent for disobeying it. However, this governing body was subservient to Rome, a state no one would mistake for an example of moral, ethical governance. It is secular government to which Paul refers in the passages above, and he calls them "God's public servants". There was a temple tax only levied by Israel, but when combined with "tribute" (secular government tax) it seems clear that Paul had the Roman government in mind.

Certainly everyone could agree that a Christian cannot obey any law that would violate the faith, and many were executed by Rome for that reason. So how can we resolve this seeming conflict between what Paul said about secular government, and his own eventual (and wrongful) death at the hands of that government? Is Paul saying that God willed for Rome to be brutal and unjust? Does it mean for us today that if our government uses our taxes to fund abortion or war, we must support it? Did God actually ordain that the current treasonous and criminal world leaders should be obeyed by Christians without protest?

God doesn't cause sin or tempt people to sin (James 1:13). But he does raise up or bring down governments and kingdoms, sometimes to punish others (e.g. Isaiah 10:5-6). Certainly God would and could take down any wicked

government as he saw fit, but he doesn't always do so; in fact, the prophecies of the end times require a whole world filled with evil governments.

## The Answers

How does any of this help to answer the question about whether Christians can oppose or even revolt against any government? Certainly Peter was not plotting to disband the Sanhedrin, and Paul was not a subversive against Rome. But in both cases, the injustice of the governing body was being confronted. They still had to suffer the consequences of this confrontation, but it was well within their rights as Christians and citizens to do so. The Romans passage speaks of the government as only being fearful to those who do evil, but when the government itself is doing evil, scripture does not teach or show by example that we're obligated to comply. In fact, we must speak up in opposition.

The ramifications of this issue are very important. Some Christians believe that we must support the government even when it starts wars, because loyalty to the state means never questioning anything it does. But this would include supporting abortion for example. How can it be that we should turn a blind eye to the carnage and suffering of aggressive wars while (rightly) protesting the slaughter of unborn children? Conservative Christians see through the double standard when liberals support abortion but oppose capital punishment (killing the innocent instead of the guilty), but they seem blind to the same double standard between war and abortion.

So can and should Christians oppose the government over any and all unjust laws and actions? Scripture seems to answer in the affirmative. This does not mean we try to overthrow government, either our own or someone else's. Rather, it means we speak up to defend the oppressed and oppose unjust laws. And when we pray for secular leaders, it's so that they won't oppress us, not to wish them success in everything they do. To bless the wicked is to curse the righteous.

Then what of the current situation where, in most countries, the governments are so thoroughly corrupt and oppressive that there is no due process, no hon-

est voting, no means of peaceful change? Some leave the oppressive countries, but the list of non-oppressive countries shrinks by the day, and there is nowhere for millions of refugees to go. In the case of Jesus, God told his parents to take him out of Israel for a time, and God gave them the opportunity and ability to do so. In the case of Jesus' prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem, he told everyone to flee to the mountains (Mat. 24:16). But here again, there was a divine command, an opportunity, and a place to go.

Scripturally, it seems that if a wicked government is there by God's permission, then only God can tear it down, even by using other governments, as when Jerusalem fell in 70 AD. Will the western governments fall? Eventually, yes. But in the meantime, it would seem clear that Christians must not plot to overthrow them, but rather keep praying for God to do so, and that we can live in peace while we wait (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We are to be good citizens to the extent we're able (Titus 3:1), yet without engaging in sin. But we also must stand clearly and strongly against all evil, be willing to speak out and confront, and be willing to accept the consequences.

Some believe that any form of government is intrinsically evil. They cite the fact that in scripture most references to governments are condemnations, and that even Israel's demand for a king was against the will of God (1 Sam. 8:6-7). The history of Israel is a history of kings being killed and replaced, but not even David, who was rightly and divinely chosen to replace evil Saul, would take by force what was rightfully his (1 Sam. 24:6-7). Instead, he waited for God to act, and God acted by making David king in due time. So God does in fact set up kings and states, though ideally only God should be the head of any country. But that time is not yet, and for now we're under human governments.

## **What about anarchy?**

If we were to be given the opportunity to start over completely, what should Christians do? Should we set up any government at all? The problem with anarchy is that the more aggressive and less ethical are going to wreak havoc on society, such that everyone would have to keep constant guard over them-

selves and their property, and everyone would be a vigilante (but see [this video](#) for a defense of anarchy).

## Conclusion

If there must be some form of government, then it's our obligation to pray for that government to leave people in peace and bring evildoers to justice. Every human government will become corrupt in time; the cycle never ends until God intervenes. Our loyalty as Christians must always be to God and righteousness above all, not blindly given to the wicked just because they are the state. Worship God, not government.

## Church Councils

This study will cover important church councils in history. It won't be exhaustive since there were many councils, not all of which involved all believers; see [this source](#) for a more detailed list.

### The Council at Jerusalem (~50 a.d.)

This is recorded in Acts 15. The issue was whether Gentile converts to Christianity would be subject to the law of Moses, and the decision was 'no'.

### The Council at Jamnia (~90 a.d.)

See [this source](#).

### The 1st Council at Nicaea (~325 a.d.)

First we need to know what was percolating **before** this council was convened, from historian Philip Schaff in his [History of the Christian Church](#), ch. 4, sec. 42 "Clergy and Laity", as excerpted [here](#). ("Sacerdotalism" is the belief that there must be a priesthood mediating between God and people.)

According to [this source](#), the primary agenda was on the deity of Jesus and the celebration of Easter. Constantine the First presided, mostly as a moderator, but it set the precedent of a government official being involved in church matters. It followed the 313 a.d. Edict of Milan that officially ended Roman governmental persecution of Christians. Learn the lesson from this: Decades of severe persecution couldn't stop the faith from spreading, but offer peace to the weary and they'll be very tempted to accept the government's involvement. This was the birth of tradition over truth, the fake over the genuine, and it's this that most of the world considers Christianity. It's not enough to merely claim an infiltration; we must have evidence.

Notice especially what was **not** on the agenda: the canon. It wasn't until 367 a.d. that **Athanasius** made a complete list of the 66 books as we know them; the Council and Constantine were not involved. For more about that, see [this source](#).

## The 2nd Council at Nicaea (~787 a.d.)

According to [New World Encyclopedia](#), the primary agenda was to restore the adoration of icons and relics, and to forbid women from residing in monasteries or the houses of bishops, to avoid the appearance of immorality. The canon was still not on the agenda. Constantine the Sixth presided.

## Conclusion

Critics of the Bible simply parrot the claim, “Constantine and the Roman Catholic Church decided the canon at the Council of Nicaea”— no details, no dates, no research. But the important fact is that the New Testament never ordered any future councils. Doctrine and practices were set by the original apostles, without rules about icons, church buildings, sacred calendars, clergy, memberships, rituals, or anything else associated with tradition. So **appeals to post-apostolic councils** as somehow having any Biblical weight or authority are red herring fallacies against the Bible and anything it teaches.



# The Nature of God

## The Trinity

The concept of God as a Trinity of “persons” sharing one will is hotly debated, even among professing Christians. To find the truth, we must look at what the Bible itself tells us. After all, there is no point in debating the nature of the Christian God without using the Bible and presuming its divine authorship.

One important aspect of God as a Trinity, which is not expressly stated as such but strongly inferred from many references, is that God has only one will. There is never an instance in scripture where the will of God is plural (that is, the “wills” of God). The sole exception is that of Jesus, who has had a dual divine/human nature since his incarnation. The reason this is important is because hierarchy cannot exist in a single will. It is only Jesus’ human nature that has its own will and is subordinate to God, just as all other humans are subordinate to God.

## The Unity of the One True God

*(against tritheism, meaning three gods)*

- The Father and Son are one God— John 1:1, 18, John 10:30, John 17:21-23, Phil. 2:6, Col. 1:15-20, Heb. 1:3
- All three are the one Creator— Gen. 1:2, Deut. 32:6, Col. 1:15-20
- The Father and Spirit conceived the incarnate Son— Mat. 1:18, Luke 1:35
- Jesus raised himself from the dead— John 2:19-21
- God raised Jesus from the dead— Acts 2:24
- The Father raised Jesus from the dead— Gal. 1:1
- The Son is God and became human— Phil. 2:5-11
- The Son and Father cannot be separated— 1 John 2:23

## **The Diversity of the Persons**

*(against modalism, meaning one God with three roles or manifestations)*

- The Father begets the Son— Psalm 2:7
- All three present at once— Mat. 3:16-17
- The Son speaks of his Father— John 8:54
- The Son prays to the Father and was sent by him— Luke 23:34, John 11:41-42
- The Son sends the Spirit— John 15:26, 16:7
- The Son and Father both mentioned— 1 John 2:23

## **The Shared Authority of the Persons**

*(against strict and exclusive roles among the Persons)*

- The Father sends the Son— 1 John 4:14
- The Father sends the Spirit— Luke 11:13, John 14:26
- The Father glorifies the Son— John 8:54
- The Father is one in whose name people are to be baptized— Mt. 28:19
- The Son sends the Spirit— John 15:26, 16:7
- The Son sends the Father— Mt. 26:53, Luke 23:34, John 17:1
- The Son is called “the everlasting Father ”— Isaiah 9:6
- The Son is one in whose name people are to be baptized— Mt. 28:19
- The Spirit sends the Son— Mt. 4:1
- The Spirit anoints the Son— Acts 10:38
- The Spirit goes as he wills— John 3:8
- The Spirit inspired all scripture— Acts 1:16, 1 Peter 1:12, 2 Peter 1:21
- The Spirit indwells believers— Acts 2:4
- The Spirit teaches— Luke 12:12
- The Spirit gives gifts— Heb. 2:4
- The Spirit indwelt John the Baptist and Jesus— Luke 1:15, 4:1

- The Spirit must not be blasphemed— Luke 12:10, Mt. 12:32
- The Spirit gives orders to people— Acts 13:2-4, 16:6 20:28
- The Spirit seals believers— Eph. 1:13
- The Spirit is one in whose name people are to be baptized— Mt. 28:19

## The Divinity of the Son

- Many references have people offering worship to Jesus. Though the Greek word for 'worship' is often used for a fellow human with higher social rank, it is also used for deity. But it should be noted that in Rev. 22:8-9, whatever John was doing toward the angel should only be done toward God.
- In Mat. 22:44 Jesus quotes Ps. 110:1 to the Pharisees, who agree that it is about the Messiah. Jesus asks them how the Messiah can be David's descendant when David calls him "Lord", and they could not answer. In that verse we see that there is a "Lord" of David who says something to David's "Lord", and even the Pharisees interpreted it as that the Messiah must be more than human, or they would have said something.
- In Mat. 28:18 Jesus instructs the disciples to baptize people in the name (singular) of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Clearly the Son is as much God as God's own Spirit.
- John 1:14 states that "the Word became flesh and lived among us".
- John 17:5 quotes Jesus as saying to the Father, "Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began". This is the same book of John that began with the statement, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".
- Phil. 2:5-11 states that Jesus temporarily set aside his privileges as God to become human, then returned to his place with God.
- Col. 1:15-20 states that Jesus created and sustains everything, and that the totality of God is embodied in him.
- Heb. 1:2 states that the Son created the universe. Vs. 3 states that the Son "is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being". Vs. 6 says to "let all God's angels worship him". In vs. 8 God says about the Son, "Your throne, O God, will last forever". Vs. 10 says that "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth". Ch. 9 vs. 15-20 says that the only

way to enact the new covenant was by the death of the one making it, so Jesus had to be God.

- Isaiah 9:6 says, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Here the Son is called the Father and the Mighty God.

## The Divinity and Sentience of the Holy Spirit

(being both God and a Person)

- The HS can be blasphemed— Mark 3:29, Luke 12:10
- God pours his love into our hearts through the HS— Rom. 5:5
- Our bodies are the temple of the HS— 1 Cor. 6:19
- We are sealed with the HS as a guarantee of our salvation— Eph. 1:14
- We must not grieve the HS— Eph. 4:30
- The HS lives in us— 2 Tim. 1:14
- The HS gives us rebirth when poured out on us via Jesus— Titus 3:5-6
- The HS speaks to us— Heb. 3:7-11, 9:8
- The HS commissioned the apostles— 1 Peter 1:12
- The HS gives prophecies— 2 Peter 1:21

Here is the logical proof:

1. Only persons can be grieved, and only divinity can be blasphemed
2. The HS can be grieved (Eph. 4:30) and blasphemed (Luke 12:10)
3. ∴ The HS is a divine Person

The Holy Spirit is referred to as “she” in the Hebrew, and “it ” in the Greek. But regardless of the grammatical gender of pronouns, it is clear from the totality of scripture that the Holy Spirit is not a mere force but is in fact a Person of the Trinity just as much as the Father and Son. But just as clearly, the Holy Spirit is not gendered, just as the Father is not gendered (Num. 23:19, John 4:24). Though God is described as having body parts in various passages, these are anthropomorphisms (ways to describe in human terms). Only Jesus

in his incarnation is gendered (Phil. 2:5-11), since he alone has the dual nature of both God and human.

## Conclusion

There is one God, composed of three Persons, each of which is fully God and not a physical or gendered entity. Jesus alone has a dual nature as both divine and human, the latter of which was physical and gendered at his incarnation. Critics of this view, whether believers or unbelievers, have to ignore or reinterpret all of these passages in order to claim otherwise.

## God the Father

In Christian theology there is very little controversy about the nature of God as regards “the Father”, the eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing Creator. Yet the very word “Father” indicates a **change of relationship at a point in time** (see Heb. 1:5,5), since parents must have existed prior to their children. Thus terms such as “eternal Father” or “eternal Son(ship)” are oxymorons on the order of “original copy” or “true lies”. The eternal existence of God in three Persons does not, and could not, mean that a father/son relationship was also eternal.

This brings us to the matter of alleged hierarchy among the Persons, with the Father at the top. A prerequisite of hierarchy is the existence of more than one will, yet never in scripture do we see the will of God as plural (wills). As shown in the Great Commission of Mat. 28:19 the Father, Son, and Spirit have one shared Name, though the three Persons are distinct. Please see the chapters on Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity as a whole. Our inability to fully grasp how three can be one is no excuse to ignore scriptural descriptions of God as such.

Only one Person added human nature to God as described in John 1 and Phil. 2, the one we call Jesus. Failure to remember his dual nature is the root of many false teachings, not the least of which is that God’s one will is somehow hierarchical. Jesus, as a mortal, showed by example how people should relate to their Creator: as a benevolent yet just and powerful Father, deserving of

both our love and our respect. What Jesus did **not** model for us is how some people should be under permanent authority of others (especially not in marriage), or that God has a split will. This answers the question of how Jesus could be God if he prayed to God.

## As distinguished from other so-called gods

Look again at the first three sections in The Trinity to learn why, unlike in other religions, the Persons of the Trinity are neither one Person with three manifestations (i.e. “wearing different hats”) nor three separate gods.

## As the One who offers to adopt us

As explained in passages such as John 3:16 and 2 Cor. 5:18-20, the one true God reaches out to us and offers to adopt us out from this flawed “orphanage”. This offer is a gift (Rom. 4:2-5, Eph. 2:8-9); it cannot be earned or forced, as other religions and heresies teach. This is the God of the Bible, the one whose attributes leave all other gods behind.

# God the Son (Jesus)

The debate over the deity of Christ is certainly not new. It was one of the main reasons for convening the first Council of Nicaea in the fourth century. Over time, various views disputing Christ’s deity arose; [here](#) are some of the main ones:

- **[Subordinationism](#)**: The Father ranks over the Son, who ranks over the Holy Spirit. Neither the Son nor the Spirit are of the same divine nature as the Father.
- **[Arianism](#)** grew out of Subordinationism, and adds that the Father created the Son, who created everything else.
- **[Socinianism](#)** takes the next step of saying that the Son was a mere holy man who did not exist prior to his earthly conception— which paints the Gospel writers as liars. It also denies the personhood of the Spirit, and by extension the Trinity. Thus the Son could not be the substitutionary sacrifice for mankind, which is the key to the dispute.

To [Athanasius](#), the 20th bishop of Alexandria who was prominent in the debate against Arius at the 1st Council of Nicaea, Christ's divinity was no trifling matter. Salvation itself was at stake, because only someone who was fully human could atone for human sin, and only someone who was fully divine could have the power to save us. The logic of the New Testament doctrine of salvation assumes the dual nature of Christ.

There are other -isms than these of course, but it demonstrates the fact that this debate has been raging ever since the apostles died. With that being the case, we shouldn't think that we'll settle the dispute any time soon. What we **can** do is present our arguments and let the readers weigh the evidence for themselves, paying careful attention to whether a claim **can be ruled out**. I would also ask the readers to weigh between that which is **explicitly** stated, and that which is only **implicit**. Ockham's Razor is a good guide on any complex or controversial topic. Or as it was put by Dr. David L. Cooper (1886-1965), founder of The Biblical Research Society,

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.

This isn't a special rule for the Bible; it's just good reading comprehension.

## God, Lord, Father, Son, Savior, Messiah

We'll begin our study with Zech 12:10 ([Hebrew](#) and [Greek](#)), which states that “**they** (house of David and citizens of Jerusalem) will look upon **me** and mourn for **him**”. Whether one wishes to interpret this as a Messianic prophecy or not, such a meaning cannot be ruled out; it has as much validity as any alternative.

Now look at Isaiah 52:13-53:12. If you try and substitute *Israel* throughout the passage it makes no sense. Again, though some interpret the passage as referring to Israel in some metaphorical way, the literal interpretation cannot be ruled out, and it's the simplest, most straightforward explanation.

Look also at Isaiah 9:6, where the Son is called the Everlasting Father and the Mighty God. To invoke metaphor is to beg the question, as is the idea that these titles are merely honorary. The same holds true for Deut. 32:15, Isaiah 43:11, and Hosea 13:4, which say that God is the **only** Savior.

New Testament references to these titles are found in Luke 2:11, John 4:42, Acts 5:31, 13:23, Phil. 3:20, and Titus 2:13. Regarding that last one, grammatically speaking, both of the nouns (God and Savior) modify Christ. The koine (1st cent. common) Greek rule called *the TSKS construction* (see [Sharp's rules](#)), is that whenever we see (1)the definite article, (2)a noun, (3)and, (4)a noun, they always refer to the same person. Therefore the expression “the God and Savior Jesus” refers only to Jesus. So here we have an explicit affirmation of the deity of Christ, and no valid reason to ignore the grammar or twist it to split God and Jesus.

Next take a look at Mt. 22:41-46, where Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 and asks the Pharisees how the Messiah could merely be a descendant of David. They were stumped— which was no easy task, if you know anything about the Pharisees. But see also Ps. 110:4, which identifies this “Lord” as an eternal priest in the order of Melchizedek, a priesthood not part of the line of Aaron and Levi. For anyone interested, there's much more about this priesthood in Heb. chapters 5-7, and of course Gen. 14:18-20.

## Visibility

An often-overlooked factor in this debate is the matter of appearances or visibility of God. As you study some of the pertinent passages, 1 Cor. 10:1-4, Col. 1:15-20, and Col. 2:9, you see that any time God “appears” it must be Jesus. This includes all Old Testament [theophanies](#).

## A good man

Would a mere “good man” or “not God” say the words in these references? Take a look at Mark 2:5-7, Mark 14:61-64, John 2:19-21, John 8:23-24, 58-59, John 14:6-9, John 10:28-33, Rev. 1:8, Rev. 21:6, and Rev. 22:13,16. It should be very clear that no mere good man could utter those words. In addition to

those, we have the clear declarations given in these passages: Mat. 1:23, John 1:1-5,14,29-30,45, John 17:5, John 20:28, Phil. 2:6-7, and Heb. 1:2-10. Note also that both Mat. 2:2 and Rev. 19:10 use the word for *worship* (G4352). It was directed at Jesus as a baby, and when John tried to direct it to the angel in Rev. he was told it was only for God.

At a point in time, Jesus added human nature to God nature. Genetically speaking, mitochondria are DNA passed on only through the female. They enable the body to aerobically respire, so without them we could not survive. Jesus had to have the mitochondrial DNA of Mary in order to live as a human. Biblically speaking, Jesus had to share in our human nature; see Rom. 8:3, Phil. 2:7, Heb. 9:16-17, 27-28.

This explains how Jesus could both **be** God and pray **to** God. Now as you also check Heb. 2:17, Acts 13:33, Heb. 5:5, and 1 Cor. 2:7-8, what other explanation can be given for all this? It says that Jesus had to **become** like us in every way. And since one cannot become what one already is, “Today **I have become** your Father” means there was an unprecedented event that happened at a point in time, a colossal change. In fact, we see that this Jesus was “the Lord of Glory” who would not have been crucified if this had not been kept **hidden** from the rulers of this age. How could attributes that hadn’t changed from eternity past have been kept hidden?

Consider also the Great Commission in Mat. 28:19, where Jesus says to baptize in the **name** (singular) of the Father, **and of** the Son, **and of** the Holy Spirit.

## The New Covenant

Finally, we must consider the matter of covenants. There were at least 5 major covenants as illustrated [here](#). Note especially the only **bilateral and conditional** covenant among them: the one between God and the people of Israel, as shown in Ex. 19-24. Now look at Heb. 9:15-18; it is Jesus who mediates the new covenant, via his death and shed blood, because the **death of the testator** had to be proved before it could be in force. Who was the testator, the one who made the covenant? **God**. Remember also what Jesus said at the Last

Supper in Luke 22:20, quoted again in 1 Cor. 11:25: “This cup is **the New Covenant** in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

## Conclusion

Arguments against the deity of Christ have failed to demonstrate that it can be ruled out, given that the many passages cited here must all be dismissed as meaning something other than what they say. The argument against the deity of Christ relies heavily upon implication to change explicit statements affirming his deity into mere euphemisms.

The clincher is that only **God** could enact the New Covenant, and only by proving his death. A mere good man, or especially a being who is neither human nor divine, could never be the sacrifice for sin— the Redeemer, the Mediator, the Savior. Only God can be those things, and Jesus **is** those things. It can't be stated any clearer or simpler than this:

1. Only God's death could enact the New Covenant
2. Jesus' death enacted the New Covenant
3. ∴ Jesus is God

## The Life of Jesus

This is an outline of the facts about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, not about his divinity. Additional material on his name can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

1. What year was Jesus born?
  1. Clues from scripture
    1. During the reign of Herod the Great (not to be confused with Herod Antipas [Mat. 14:1], who was to be involved in Jesus' trial and whose rule would partially coincide with that of Pontius Pilate) and his brother Philip (Mat. 2:1, Luke 1:5, 3:1)
    2. During the reign of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1)

3. During the 15th year of the governorship of Tiberias Caesar (Luke 3:1)
  4. During the rule of Pontius Pilate (Luke 3:1)
  5. During the rule of Lysanias (Luke 3:1)
  6. During the census of the governorship of Quirinius over Syria (Luke 2:2)
2. Clues from secular history
    1. Historian Josephus (~37–100 a.d.) gives details putting Herod the Great's death in 1 b.c. ([source](#)), and since Herod lived at least two years after Jesus was born (Mat. 2:16), the latest year for his birth would be 3 b.c.
    2. The times of all the others are also verified and thus support the Biblical narrative. (Augustus: lived 63 b.c.–14 a.d.; Tiberius: lived 42 b.c.–37 a.d.; Pontius Pilate: ruled 26 a.d.–36 a.d.; Herod Antipas: lived ~20 a.d.–39 a.d.; Lysanias: precise years unknown, but referenced by various sources including Josephus as during that general time; Quirinius ordered the census during that general time)
  3. Clues from astronomy
    1. Josephus puts Herod's death shortly after a lunar eclipse. There was a full lunar eclipse on Jan. 10, 1 b.c., a partial one on March 13, 4 b.c., and another full eclipse on March 23, 5 b.c.
2. What time of year was Jesus born?
    1. With reference to John the Baptist
      1. John was conceived shortly after his father Zacharias was told he would have a son, when an angel appeared to him during his service as High Priest in the Abija order, which always served in late spring.
      2. John's mother Elizabeth was in her sixth month when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:36).
      3. John was likely born in March, and if so, Jesus was born in September.

4. The apostle John used the term “the Word... tabernacled among us” (John 1:14), and the Feast of Tabernacles was in late Sept./early Oct.
2. With reference to the shepherds and secular rulers
  1. Shepherds only watched their flocks out in the fields by night (Luke 2:7–8) during birthing season, which was in the fall.
  2. The census would not have been ordered so as to require travel in the cold of winter.
3. What did Jesus do (or not do) while growing up?
  1. Explicit scriptural statements
    1. Grew up in Nazareth (Mat. 2:23, Luke 2:39)
    2. Became strong and wise and advanced in maturity (Luke 2:40,52)
    3. Attended the Passover each year in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41)
    4. At age twelve he challenged the rabbis and impressed them with his intelligence and wisdom (Luke 2:46-47)
  2. Implicit scriptural statements
    1. Lived under the laws of Moses
    2. Never broke any of the laws (ref. 2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5)
    3. Likely worked with his father as a carpenter/builder (Mat. 13:55, Mark 6:3)
  3. Conclusions regarding theories of activities outside of Judea
    1. Theories alleging that Jesus traveled to Europe or India only arose in the late medieval period and supply no evidence of his presence there.
    2. Theories alleging that Jesus studied with the Essenes only arose after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and likewise supply no evidence of his presence there.
    3. The people of his hometown took offense at his teaching on the grounds that he was unstudied and untraveled (Mat. 13:55, Mark 6:3).
4. How long was Jesus’ public ministry?

1. When did it begin?
  1. When he was about the age of 30 (Luke 3:23)
  2. After his baptism and temptation (Mark 1:10-14, John 1:32)
  3. About a week or so before a Passover (John 2:13; references to days are in vs. 1:29,35,43, 2:1,12)
2. When did it end?
  1. During a Passover (all four Gospel accounts)
  2. After one Passover (remotely possible, two, though it is unlikely that an entire year transpired between the feasts mentioned in these two references) apart from the one at the beginning (John 5:1,6:4)
5. When was Jesus crucified?
  1. Determining the year
    1. Jesus was about 32 years old, given the length and starting age of his ministry. So if he was born in 3 b.c., then the year would be 30 a.d.
  2. Determining the season
    1. The first month of the Hebrew calendar was called Nisan or Abib/Aviv, when the crescent moon was first sighted at the time the barley harvest was ripe in the spring, as specified in Exodus 12.
    2. Passover was always in this first month, so the season was spring.
  3. Determining the day
    1. Exodus 12 specifies the 10th of Nisan as when a flawless year-old male lamb (or goat) was to be selected for each family. The animal was to be kept under observation for any defects until the 14th, when at twilight all the acceptable lambs were to be slaughtered and then eaten. This marked the start of a 7-day period beginning and ending with a “sacred assembly” (a.k.a. a Sabbath), and all yeast had to be purged from every house for the entire 7 days. The 14th became known as Preparation Day, and the 15th was the actual Passover, though the whole festival was also called the Passover. So regardless of the Gregorian calendar dates, the Preparation was the 14th and the Passover was the 15th.
    2. Jesus visited Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12:1), which as explained next would have been Nisan 9.

3. His Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem was the next day (John 12:12), marking the beginning of his being “kept under observation” during the same days as the lambs for the Passover. As stated in Exodus 12, this day was Nisan 10. Toward the end of that day (Mark 11:10ff), Jesus briefly visited the temple and then went to Bethany for the night.
4. The next day, Nisan 11, Jesus drove the merchants from the temple.
5. The next day, Nisan 12, the religious leaders began to strongly challenge Jesus, and Mark 14:1 states that the Passover feast was two days away; note that the feast began with the Preparation on the 14th.
6. The Preparation Day, Nisan 14, began at sundown with the Last Supper (John 13:1).
7. The next daylight, still part of the Preparation (John 19:14,31,42), was the time of Jesus’ trials; see the following point.
8. A 24-hour day in Israel began at sundown and was divided into segments called “hours” or “watches” (as relates to guard duty). Each “hour” was really a three-hour span, but it was known by its beginning; that is, the “third hour” lasted from 9 o’clock to 12 o’clock, counting from either 6 a.m. or 6 p.m. Going by the position of the sun or moon in the sky made greater precision impractical. But more importantly, the expressions “the third hour” and “almost/about the sixth hour” refer to the same three-hour span, with the latter meaning it was close to the end of that span. [see David Lipscomb (1831-1917), *A Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, p. 295-296].
9. As just explained, Jesus was condemned at about 11 a.m. (John 19:14) and crucified at about noon (Mark 15:25).
10. Jesus died after three hours of darkness from about noon until 3 p.m. (Mark 15:33), after which his body was taken down by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who wrapped and buried it (John 19:38-42). This was at sundown on Nisan 14, just before the Passover itself began on the 15th.
11. There were two Sabbaths that week, since Mark 16:1 has women buying burial spices after the Sabbath, while Luke 23:56 has them

buying the spices before the Sabbath. The first on Nisan 15 was the “special Sabbath” or Passover, and the second on Nisan 17 was the normal weekly Sabbath.

12. Since the Preparation that year was three days before the normal Sabbath, and since the normal Sabbath was always from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, then Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday. Further, since the Triumphal Entry was on Nisan 10 and the 15th was a Thursday, then the Triumphal Entry was on a Sabbath, meaning Saturday.
4. Extra-Biblical corroboration
    1. Tacitus, a Roman historian antagonistic to Christianity, referred to the execution of “Christus” by Pilate in his *Annals* (book 15, chap. 44), written about 116 a.d.
    2. Josephus, a Jewish historian, referred to Jesus twice in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (books 18 and 20), written about 93–94 a.d.
    3. There is nearly universal acknowledgement of the facts of Jesus’ baptism by John and his crucifixion by Pilate.
6. When did Jesus rise from the dead?
    1. Considering the Jewish feasts
      1. The Passover was when the Pharisees demanded that the tomb be sealed (Mat. 27:62-66), which may serve as the time from which “the third day” would be determined (Mat. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19). This would be the only way to reconcile that phrase with Jesus’ statement about being three days and three nights “in the belly of the earth” (Mat. 12:40).
      2. While it is true that “Sabbath” by itself could be simply another name for an ordinary week rather than just the Sabbath day itself, the plural was not, except as in the phrase “Sabbath of Sabbaths” meaning a special Sabbath (the Passover itself). Context may also indicate a week, such as “I fast twice every Sabbath”, which wouldn’t make sense if it meant a literal Sabbath day. So if we see “first/one of Sabbaths” in the Greek, we know it refers to the annual Feast of Firstfruits rather than an ordinary week or weekly Sabbath.

3. Mark 16:1-2 states that the women took the spices to the tomb “after the Sabbath... extremely early on the First of Sabbaths, just as the sun was beginning to rise”. We know that Jesus had already arisen before dawn, and that this was on the first day of the week which had begun at sundown Saturday (Nisan 18). And since verse 9 says that Jesus arose “early [prOi, the last watch of the night, about 3–6 a.m.] on the first of Sabbaths” [that is, the Feast of First-fruits, always the day after the weekly Sabbath after Passover, and the start of marking off 7 weeks till Pentecost], it was while it was still dark on Sunday. Then after this he appeared to Mary Magdalene at dawn. The same but slightly less detail as Mark’s account is given in Mat. 28:1, Luke 24:1, and John 20:1.
2. Considering the Roman guards
  1. These were Roman soldiers rather than Jewish temple guards, since the Jewish leaders had to ask Pilate for them.
  2. The Jewish leaders bribed the Roman guards so they would lie about the resurrection and claim the disciples stole Jesus’ body while they were asleep (Mat. 28:11-15). The bribe was necessary because otherwise the guards would be executed for dereliction of duty.
  3. The Roman soldiers had no concern about Jewish religious affairs, and thus had no motivation to help the fearful and clueless disciples (John 20:19) steal the body.
3. Considering the testimony of eyewitnesses
  1. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and their companions saw Jesus alive in the grave garden, though they were clearly resigned to the fact that he had died, rather than hallucinating (Luke 24:10, John 20:11-18).
  2. The two walking to Emmaus saw Jesus alive (Luke 24:13-36).
  3. The inner circle of disciples and many others saw Jesus appear alive and in the flesh, in the locked room where they were hiding (John 20:19).
  4. Within 30 years of the events, Paul wrote that over 500 people saw Jesus alive again after his crucifixion (1 Cor. 15:6).
7. What did Jesus do up to the time he ascended to heaven?

1. Activities
  1. Scolded the disciples for disbelief (Mark 16:14)
  2. Appeared to many people, as explained in the previous point
  3. Appeared to his apostles (Acts 1:2-3)
  4. Appeared to the disciples who were fishing (John 21:1-14)
  5. Brought the sacrifice of his blood to the altar in heaven (Heb. 9:12)
  6. Brought the righteous dead from Paradise to heaven (Eph. 4:8-10, with ref. to Luke 16:19-31 where Lazarus was in Paradise, contrasted with 2 Cor. 5:8 where Paul says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord)
2. Teachings
  1. The testing of Peter's love (John 21:15-19)
  2. The Great Commission (Mat. 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:45-48)
  3. The unspecified teachings about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3,7)
3. Manner of ascension
  1. The witnesses, his disciples (Luke 24:33, 24:50-52)
  2. The promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5,8)
  3. The rising into the sky and then hidden by clouds (Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9-11)
  4. The promise to return the same way (Acts 1:11)

## God the Holy Spirit

Is the Holy Spirit simply the essence of God, just as our own spirits are the essence of us? To answer that question, we need to see whether scripture presents the Spirit in terms that indicate something more.

Let's begin with the issue of pronouns. The Holy Spirit is referred to as "she" in the Hebrew text and "it" in the Greek. The only instance where a masculine pronoun is used is in John 15:26, and only because the noun it describes is The Advocate or Comforter, which is a masculine noun. Grammatical gender

has no necessary correlation with biological gender; it's much the way we might refer to a boat as "she".

Regardless of the grammatical gender of pronouns, it's clear from the totality of scripture that the Holy Spirit is not a mere force but a Person of the Trinity just as much as the Father and Son. Just as clearly, neither the Holy Spirit nor the Father are gendered (Num. 23:19, John 4:24). Though God is described as having body parts in various passages, the context indicates that these are anthropomorphisms (ways to describe in human terms). Only Jesus in his incarnation is gendered (Phil. 2:5-11), since he alone has the dual nature of both God and human.

Now let's look at the scripture references describing attributes of the Holy Spirit (HS):

- The HS can be blasphemed— Mark 3:29, Luke 12:10
- God pours his love into our hearts through the HS— Rom. 5:5
- Our bodies are the temple of the HS— 1 Cor. 6:19
- We are sealed with the HS as a guarantee of our salvation— Eph. 1:14
- We must not grieve the HS— Eph. 4:30
- The HS lives in us— 2 Tim. 1:14
- The HS gives us rebirth when poured out on us via Jesus— Titus 3:5-6
- The HS speaks to us— Heb. 3:7-11, 9:8
- The HS commissioned the apostles— 1 Peter 1:12
- The HS gives prophecies— 2 Peter 1:21

Here is the logical proof:

- Only persons can be grieved, and only divinity can be blasphemed
- The HS can be grieved (Eph. 4:30) and blasphemed (Luke 12:10)
- ∴ The HS is a divine Person

## God and Time

Can God know the future? Must it be set in stone in order for God to know it? Is God as much bound by time as we are? Can God change his mind without changing his nature or essence? These questions are raised primarily by two extremes of theology: Open Theism and Calvinism.

### Analysis

First we need to have a basic understanding of the nature of time, as best we can. [The A and B theories of time](#) can be briefly summarized as follows:

- A
  - tensed or dynamic; time passes
  - the future doesn't exist but is only a potentiality
  - the past did exist but doesn't now
  - the present alone is real
  - time cannot be traveled
  - there must be a First Cause
  - Time is composed of both **sequence** and **duration**. **Logical order** is sequence without time, since duration does not change the order.
- B
  - tenseless or static; past, present, and future all exist simultaneously
  - time can be traveled, at least in theory

These passages prove that God is outside of time because he can't be constrained or limited by anything but his own nature: Gen. 18:10, Gen. 18:18, Isaiah 46:10, Psalms 90:4, Psalms 139:16, and 2 Peter 3:8. They also prove that God does indeed know the future and interacts with time. **How** God knows the future is really irrelevant to the question of **whether** he knows it. Our inability to grasp **how** does not mean God **cannot**, and who would think that God can possibly make a baseless assertion (e.g. "declaring the end" not meaning "guaranteeing the end")? Even so, middle knowledge offers an in-

triguing solution that does not violate human free will, and we'll come back to that later.

Counterfactuals (if-then statements) in scripture indicate **dependencies** or **conditions** for God's **actions** (not **knowledge**): Gen. 4:7, Ex. 8:21, 19:5, Deut. 7:12, 8:19, 2 Chron. 7:14, Neh. 1:9, Mat. 21:22, John 3:16, Rev. 22:18-19. But what about when God says "now I know" (Gen. 22:12) or "I will know" (Gen. 18:20-21)? What about prayer, can it change what God does in the future or not? [Open Theism](#) claims that such statements prove God does not know the future. It also claims [God is constrained by time](#), as well as that **God himself changes over time**, in spite of Numbers 23:19, 1 Sam. 15:29, Psalm 102:26-27, Malachi 3:6, Heb. 13:8, and James 1:17. Who would say that if any of us changes our mind, or changes how we relate to another person, then we ourselves have changed in essence? The logic of Open Theism is severely flawed at its foundation.

So since God knows our inner thoughts and intentions (1 Chron. 28:9), he knew what Abraham had in mind (Heb. 11:19) and **did not need to test him**. The test was for Abraham's benefit, and ours. Look also at Gen. 3:9 when God asks Adam where he is; does anyone think God didn't know his location or what had happened? Look at Jonah 3:10; did God really not know which decision the Ninevites would make? In Jonah 4:2 Jonah says that God's reputation of **changing his mind** out of compassion was exactly why he ran from him in the first place, since he didn't want God to show mercy on the Ninevites. For whose benefit was the change of mind expressed to us?

The critical error of Open Theism is its illogical leap from scriptural counterfactuals to God's **inability** to know what choices we'll make. Rather than defending God's free will, creativity, or compassion as it claims, Open Theism limits God's power and knowledge and stuffs him into a tiny box that can only hold humans. It ignores the scriptures saying God does indeed know the future (i.e., it is "fixed") because it can't reconcile them with the counterfactuals. The inability lies with that theology, not with God.

Fulfilled prophecy is the fingerprint of God on the Bible. How is this even possible if God cannot know the future? How was Jesus able to reveal to John

“what was, what is, and what will be”, and ‘play the film’ before any of it happened? The other extreme from Open Theism, Calvinism, claims that God **must** cause and control every little detail in order to make prophecies come to pass, but this violates free will and again puts God in a tiny philosophical box. Middle Knowledge bridges the gap between both extremes and preserves both God’s omniscience and the concept of free will.

Middle Knowledge basically means that God knows every possible outcome from uncountable variables. Does an expert chess player win the game by controlling the opponent’s moves, or by preparing a counter-attack for every possible move? Does a racetrack determine who wins, or only determine the course? In the same way, God sets the course of history without overriding the will of any person in it. He lays out the board or track and sets the rules of the contest, then allows the contestants to make their own choices. But because God knows all the possible choices, the outcome he chose will prevail.

## Conclusion

Open Theism and Calvinism both try to solve problems created by their theologies, and both of them seem to think these are the only two possibilities. Is Middle Knowledge the solution to all of them? Possibly, but who can really know how God does what he does (Isaiah 55:8-9)? All we know from scripture is that God himself never changes, but his dealings with us have changed many times (Heb. 1:1-2). Our actions, prayers, choices, and attitudes affect how we “run the race”, and God speaks to us in terms we can grasp. But he knows the future and has given us the freedom and responsibility to live as we choose, either in alignment with or opposition to his will.

# Prophecy

## Prophecy List

This is a list of all the prophecies believed to have at least a partial fulfillment remaining for the future. The items are given in the order they appear in most standard English Bibles, and the descriptions give the gist of the passage according to where they appear in the text.

### Psalm 83

Enemies of Israel intend to band together and wipe it off the map: Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Agrites, Byblos, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia, Tyre, and Assyria. These correspond roughly to modern-day Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Gaza, Syria, northern Iraq, and possibly parts of Egypt.

### Isaiah 17

A prophecy against Damascus:

1. Damascus will no longer be a city (suddenly, overnight) but will lie in ruins, replaced by grazing flocks.
2. It will happen when the glory of Israel has faded almost to the point of death.
3. That day will also be when people turn back to God.

### Jeremiah 30:7

1. The Day of the Lord will be a time of great trouble for Jacob, though he will survive it.
2. God will save them out of exile where they were scattered among the nations.
3. Whoever attacks Israel will be attacked.
4. The people of Israel will be numerous and prosperous.

## Ezekiel 36-37

1. Though they had been unfaithful and suffered punishment, Israel is promised revenge against all enemies, and restoration of their land and people, not because they earned it but so God would be glorified.
2. God will gather them from all the nations and bring them back to their own land.
3. God will change their hearts so that they will keep his laws.
4. In the vision of the valley of dry bones, God shows that this restoration will be in stages: the bones assemble and are covered with skin, but they were not yet alive, then God breathes life into them.
5. All the tribes of Israel will join together, no longer divided in two, with David reigning over them.
6. God will permanently put his Temple there.

## Ezekiel 38-39

The prophecy about Gog, of the land of Magog in the far north, ruler of Meshek and Tubal. The nations listed correspond roughly to modern Russia, Iran, northern Africa, eastern Europe, and Turkey.

1. God will put hooks in his jaw and turn him and his whole army around, including those of Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth Togarmah from the far north.
2. They will invade a rich land that has recovered from war, whose people came from many nations to Israel and were now living securely, peacefully, and unsuspecting.
3. Mere protest will be offered by Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish. Sheba and Dedan are roughly equivalent to modern Saudi Arabia, while Tarshish may refer to areas as far as Britain and the rest of western Europe.
4. When Gog attacks Israel there will be a great earthquake there, causing the whole world to shake with fear in the presence of God.
5. God will cause the invading army to turn on itself, and there will be plague, torrential rain, hail, and burning sulphur, destroying the army on the moun-

tains of Israel and in the open field, where the carrion birds and wild animals will consume their bodies.

6. God will send down fire on the land of Magog and those who live safely on the coastlands.
7. This causes all Israel to know that God is the Lord, and the world to know that Israel had been punished for its sins.
8. People from the towns of Israel will collect the weapons and burn them for fuel for 7 years.
9. People of Israel will spend 7 months burying the bodies in the valley east of the sea, then conduct a more thorough search for any bodies or bones missed before.
10. God will restore Israel and remove their shame, settling them forever in the land.

## **Ezekiel 40-48**

The vision giving details of the restored land and people of Israel, commonly attributed to the Millennium:

1. The temple is measured and described in great detail.
2. The glory of God comes upon it from the east, entering through the east gate.
3. The altar is restored and purified, and the sacrifices reinstated.
4. The priesthood is restored and dedicated.
5. The whole nation is to bring special sacrifices for purification.
6. The Passover and other festivals are reinstated.
7. Water comes out from the south side of the temple toward the east, emptying into the Dead Sea and turning it fresh, and sea life flourishes in it.
8. Trees along the banks bear fruit each month, providing food and healing leaves.
9. The boundaries of Israel are described: north as far as Damascus, south to just below the Dead Sea, west to the Mediterranean Sea, and east to the Jordan River.
10. The twelve tribes are allotted their territories, as well as a special area dedicated to God where the temple and priests reside. There is also a wide area

for general pastureland, with the city in the center. The city measures about a mile and a half square and will be called *The Lord Is There*.

## **Daniel 9:24-27**

The prophecy is given of 70x7 years: to end and atone for sin, begin eternal righteousness, seal up prophecy, and anoint/dedicate the Most Holy Place.

1. 7x7 + 62x7 from command to rebuild Jerusalem until Anointed One the ruler comes.
2. Anointed One put to death.
3. The people of the coming ruler destroy Jerusalem and the Temple.
4. War and disasters will continue until the end.
5. He will confirm a treaty with many for the final 7.
6. Midway through the 7 he will end Temple sacrifice and desecrate it.
7. The end decreed upon him will come.

## **Daniel 11:31-45**

Though this was fulfilled in the past by Antiochus Epiphanes, Jesus explicitly stated that the Abomination of Desolation was also future.

1. A blasphemous king will desecrate the Temple (the Abomination of Desolation).
2. He will exalt himself above all gods, showing no regard for the gods of his ancestors or for the one desired by women. Instead he will honor a god of fortresses.
3. He will attack strong fortresses with the help of a foreign god, and he will greatly reward all who honor him, making them rulers and distributing the land for a price.
4. He will rapidly conquer many countries, including Israel, but Edom, Moab, and the leaders of Ammon will escape his conquest.
5. Alarming news from the east and north will cause him to set out in a rage, but he will fall between the [Mediterranean] sea and the holy mountain [Zion].

## Daniel 12

1. At that time, there will be unprecedented distress, but your people whose names are in the book will be delivered.
2. Multitudes who had died will arise, some to eternal life and others to eternal shame and contempt.
3. Daniel is to seal up these words until the end.
4. The fulfillment of these things will take 3-1/2 years, and will end when the power of the holy people has been broken.
5. The commencement of these things will be in the distant future from the time of Daniel.
6. 1,290 days [ $\sim 3.5 \times 360$ ] will transpire after the abolishing of the daily sacrifice and the Abomination of Desolation.
7. There is a blessing for those who wait another 45 days after this.

## Amos 9:11-15

1. In that day, God will restore the fallen kingdom of David in its ancestral land, never again to be uprooted.
2. This will take place after the people are brought back from exile.

## Joel 2

### The Day of the Lord:

1. An extremely large army comes, laying waste to everything in its path.
2. Their appearance is like galloping horses, with the noise of chariots, they leap over mountains and swarm like locusts, striking fear into everyone.
3. The earth shakes before them, the sun and moon are darkened and the stars stop shining.
4. This army is led by the Lord.
5. A trumpet is blown, and then the bride and bridegroom are to leave their rooms.

6. God promises to drive the northern horde away, driving them into both the Mediterranean and Dead seas.
7. Then God will pour out his Spirit on everyone, male and female.
8. There will be signs in the heavens, blood and fire on the earth; the sun will go dark and the moon will turn to blood before the great Day of the Lord.

## **Zechariah 14**

A day will come when Jerusalem is plundered and divided up.

1. All the nations surround the city, ransacking houses and raping women.
2. Half the city goes into exile.
3. Then the Lord fights against them. Their flesh will rot while they still stand, their eyes will be consumed in their sockets, their tongues will rot in their mouths, they will kill each other in great panic, and a plague will strike their animals.
4. His feet stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, splitting the mountain in half.
5. That day there will be no sun or darkness, no distinction between day and night.
6. Living water will flow from Jerusalem, half to the Dead Sea and half to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and winter.
7. The Lord will be king over the whole world.
8. Jerusalem will never again be destroyed.
9. Survivors from the attacking nations will visit Jerusalem each year to worship God and celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. Those who refuse will suffer drought and plague.

## **The Gospels**

1. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
2. When you see Jerusalem surrounded by military encampments, you will know that its ruin is near.

3. When you see the Abomination of Desolation (as declared through the prophet Daniel) standing in the Holy Place, then those in Judea must run away into the mountains.
4. There will be terrible stress on the world, and great rage against this people. They will be killed in battle and taken captive to all the other nations. Then Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations until their time is up.
5. The suffering of those days will be unlike anything that has happened since God first created the world until now, and will never be again. In fact, if the Lord didn't cut those days short, no living thing would survive. But those days will be cut short for the sake of his chosen ones.
6. Then there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And on the earth, the nations will be filled with anguish and perplexity due to the roaring and turbulence of the sea. People will be deathly afraid and apprehensive of what is coming upon the whole world, for the forces of the heavens will be shaken.
7. Then they will see Jesus coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when you see this all coming to pass, stand up and raise your heads, for you are about to be rescued.

## Acts and Letters

James at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-18), quoting the prophet Amos, says that “after this” God would rebuild David’s fallen tent so that all mankind would seek God, including the Gentiles bearing his name.

Paul in 1 Cor. 15:35-58 and 1 Thes. 4:13-18 says:

1. The Lord will descend from heaven.
2. The archangel will shout.
3. The trumpet will sound.
4. The dead Christians will be raised in immortal bodies.
5. The bodies of the living Christians will be instantly transformed to immortal.
6. We will all be snatched away into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
7. This is a message of comfort and hope.

Paul in 2 Thes. 2:1-12 says:

1. The Departure happens.
2. The Detainer that had been holding back the Man of Lawlessness is taken out of the way.
3. The Man of Lawlessness is revealed and identified by his desecration of the temple and declaring himself God.
4. God sends a strong delusion on all who hated the truth, so that they will be deceived.
5. Jesus will defeat this man by the breath of his mouth and glory of his arrival.

## **Revelation**

1. One of the letters to the churches, to Philadelphia, states that they will be kept out of the time of trial to come upon the whole inhabited world.
2. When John is first taken to heaven, he sees a group of 24 elders wearing victor's crowns and white clothing.
3. The three sequences of 7 judgments commence, with numerous references to Old Testament prophecies.
4. Jesus comes down to earth with the armies of heaven, to face the armies of the world massed against him.
5. Satan is bound for a thousand years, during which time the beheaded saints from the Tribulation will co-rule with Jesus.
6. Satan is briefly released and gathers an army from all over the world, with Gog of Magog mentioned by name.
7. The army is consumed by fire from heaven, and Satan is thrown into the Lake of Fire with the Beast and False Prophet.
8. The Great White Throne Judgment begins, and the dead are judged.
9. Death and Hades are thrown into the Lake of Fire, along with all whose names are not written in the Book of Life.
10. The present earth and heavens are done away with and replaced by new ones.
11. The New Jerusalem descends out of heaven, but nothing is said about whether it touches the earth, and it has no temple.

## Dispensationalism

Good reading comprehension means considering many layers of context: writer, genre, topic, language, culture, etc. This is especially important when reading the Bible, and it must be applied consistently. To neglect this approach, especially by ignoring genre and treating everything as allegory or symbolism, is to make Bible study less about finding out what God is telling us, and more about what we can make the Bible mean.

By using the principles of reading comprehension, Dispensationalism simply recognizes how God's ways of dealing with people have gone through a series of stages or dispensations, two of which remain at this time. This is not to say that God could ever change, since the scriptures expressly say otherwise, and since anyone can change their ways of doing things without changing who they are. This is also not to say that need for faith in God has ever changed, just the conditions and security of what it means to be "saved" or considered righteous.

### The Seven Dispensations

Although authors differ on the exact number and duration of the dispensations, we will use the common one which contains seven ages from the creation of Adam to the end of the Millennium. These ages are marked by a change with respect to sin and people's responsibility, and can be seen as a series of tests by God. Each dispensation is listed below, with the condition of its end:

- Innocence ---> Death
- Conscience ---> Deluge
- Authority ---> Dispersion
- Promise ---> Desertion
- Law ---> Delay
- Grace ---> Devastation
- Christ's Rule ---> Defeat

## **Innocence**

This dispensation begins with the creation of Adam and Eve as innocents. They had not yet disobeyed God and everything God created was “very good”. But as sentient beings, they had the capacity to either obey God or defy him. Some will say that God put the one restriction against eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to tempt them, but the scriptures clearly say that God tempts no one. Their potential for sin came from their sentence, their free will. So in theory they could have sinned by disobeying **any** of God’s commands, which included managing the earth and “multiplying”. But they failed to obey God in everything, and at the moment of that first sin innocence was lost. People could no longer enjoy direct communion with God, and physical death would be the fate of the first humans and all their offspring. The consequence of sin was mortality (death) for people and animals, and curses on the earth itself.

## **Conscience**

People had now acquired a conscience, an inner moral code showing the difference between good and evil. There was as yet no formal government, so each individual did whatever they chose. But as time progressed, humanity regressed— to the point that the Bible says “But the Lord saw that the wickedness of mankind had become great on the earth. Every inclination of the thoughts of their minds was only evil all the time” (Genesis 6:5). This brought on the Flood (deluge), which destroyed all but eight people, the only ones in the world who found favor with God.

## **Authority**

After the Flood, God established a rudimentary form of government. Its purpose was to slow down the spread of evil and punish it. God gave nations the right of capital punishment, a right which he did not give to the individual. Yet even then people found a way to corrupt this and use collective power to defy God again. The Tower of Babel was to be their triumph over God’s authority, so he scrambled their language into many pieces in judgment. The different

languages prevented people from communicating with each other, so they scattered (dispersed) over the earth and divided into ethnic groups.

## Promise

In time, God then chose one man, Abram (later to be called Abraham), to establish a unique people group that would eventually produce the Messiah, the Savior. God made prophetic promises to Abram, some conditional and some not. But Abraham's descendants through Isaac and then Jacob (later renamed Israel), had a habit of seeing God's power and rejecting him anyway. Though he moved them to Egypt where they prospered for a time, they became enslaved and seemingly deserted by God.

## Law

After allowing Israel to be enslaved in Egypt for hundreds of years, God had Moses lead them out and gave them a written law to obey. No more were people left to be on their honor to obey God, no more would there be any excuses. They would now have specific written regulations to abide by. Sadly though, Israel repeatedly strayed from God and suffered repeated judgments, until finally God had to drive them out of their land. Only after several centuries were they allowed to return, and then only in very small numbers, a mere remnant. It was to this remnant that Jesus came, only to be conspired against and crucified. Thus the kingdom promised to Israel would be delayed.

## Grace

It wasn't just the people of Israel who demonstrated their complete failure to obey God no matter what the circumstances. So Jesus came to do for the whole world what we were unable to do for ourselves: be cleansed once and for all from sin, from separation from God. The Bible holds Law and Grace in opposition, meaning Grace is the absence of Law. Jesus took away "the written code, which was against us, and nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). This was the way out of our hopeless condition: to trust in **Jesus'** ability to keep the law, **not our own** ability. But even with this incredible demonstration

of love and mercy from God, people still refuse to bow to him, to the point where now we can see the signs of impending worldwide judgment once again.

Although some authors treat the seven-year Tribulation as a separate dispensation, it is really the culmination of the Age of Grace. After rejecting God's own Son, "there is no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26). But the unique thing about the Age of Grace is that individual believers are personally and permanently indwelt by God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, in order for God to judge the unbelieving world, he must first remove Jesus' Body, meaning everyone who belongs to him. At that point the prophetic timetable given to Daniel and John will finish its course, the last seven years of life without the direct rule of God on earth, ending in complete devastation.

## Christ's Rule

The last dispensation is known as The Millennium, meaning a thousand years featuring the kingdom of Israel on earth. Mortals will be once again in direct communication with God, who will rule the nations "with a rod of iron"; there will be zero tolerance for rebellion. People will again live many centuries with only "sinners" dying at younger than 100 years of age. The judgment-mangled earth will be restored and repopulated, and there will at last be real peace. But at the end of it people are tested a final time, and again they fail. Rebellion in the midst of Eden brings us full circle through human history, and God must again defeat the wicked.

## Implications of Dispensationalism

Knowing all this, the Bible student can then avoid the misapplication of scripture. For example, the issue of security of salvation (whether it can be lost) hinges upon a proper understanding of the Age of Grace in which we now live. It is only the believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit who is **guaranteed** eternal life, due to the promise of God and the fact that we are "new creations" who belong to God and not to ourselves. Any commands to endure, if they are

clearly on the issue of **salvation** and not **service**, are for those believers of other ages.

The Age of Grace, also called the Church Age, is referred to in scripture as a secret that has only now been revealed (Ephesians 3:2). It is an interruption of the prophetic timetable given to Daniel, so if we think of this age as a kind of **parenthesis in prophecy**, we will see a clear and continuous sequence. This effectively clears up a lot of other theories, such as Preterism, rejection of the pre-tribulation Rapture, or legalism for church-age believers.

“if indeed you have heard of the stewardship [dispensation] of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that by revelation the divine secret was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly. When reading this, you will be able to understand my insight into this secret of Christ. Now this secret was not disclosed to people in former generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, namely, that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God’s grace that was given to me by the exercise of his power. To me, less than the least of all the saints this grace was given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ and to enlighten everyone about God’s secret plan— a secret that has been hidden for ages in God who has created all things. The purpose of this enlightenment is that through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God should now be disclosed to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms.” (Eph 3:2-10)

In light of this, we should not try to mix teachings about this current age by going to the law of Moses.

## Daniel the Prophet

Though prophecies are scattered throughout the Old Testament, arguably the best-known and most remarkable of them are found in the book of Daniel. Much of its content has already come to pass, but not all, and not all com-

pletely. But the most important aspect of Daniel is that it gives a sequence, whereas the sequence or timing of the others is less clear. Since Daniel gives an overview of history in advance, we must have a good grasp of its content before considering any of the others.

An abomination in prophecy is understood to mean that an idol is set up in a holy place that belonged to another god (see Ezekiel 8 for example). Its purpose is to defile the other god's temple. Its first use in the Bible is in Daniel 9:27, immediately after "he will put an end to sacrifice and offering". The next two references are in Dan. 11:31 and 12:11 and include the phrase "profane the sanctuary". To provide additional context for use of the word, apocryphal books (between the Testaments) also use it in the context of desecrating the temple. Antiochus Epiphanes, who died in 164 BC, is the only historical figure to deliberately fill the temple with unclean things, especially a statue of Zeus with his own face on it in the Holy Place.

So Daniel's prophecy of the Abomination was indeed fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes. But long after all of this, Jesus spoke of the Abomination as still to come. Paul also spoke of the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thes. 2:3-4) entering the temple and declaring himself God at some future time, which certainly qualifies as desecration. Also, in Rev. 13:14 we're told that an image or idol will be made, which all people on earth will be forced to worship, though it doesn't say it will be put into the temple.

This is just one of many prophecies that seem to have a "now but not yet" fulfillment; they're fulfilled in part at one time but fulfilled more completely at another time. Then the question is whether the complete fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy was met in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. It should also be emphasized that a complete fulfillment must meet every criterion and detail without exception.

Please take a moment to read these scripture quotes for Jesus' statements about events surrounding the future fulfillment of this prophecy. They are presented as lists for easier comparison.

Mat. 24:14-22

- The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- When you see “the abomination of desolation” (as declared through the prophet Daniel) standing in the Holy Place
- Then those in Judea must run away into the mountains.
- After that will be great oppression, the likes of which has never happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor will ever happen again. In fact, if those days had not been cut short, all flesh would have been wiped out, but they will be shortened for the sake of the chosen people.

#### Mark 13:14-20

- When you see “the abomination of desolation” standing where shouldn’t be
- Then those in Judea must run away into the mountains.
- The suffering of those days will be unlike anything that has happened since God first created the world until now, and will never be again. In fact, if the Master didn’t cut those days short, no living thing would survive. But those days will be cut short for the sake of his chosen ones.

#### Luke 21:20-28

- When you see Jerusalem surrounded by military encampments, you will know that its ruin is near.
- Then those in Judea must run away into the mountains.
- For there will be terrible stress on the world, and great rage against this people. They will be killed in battle and taken captive to all the other nations. Then Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations until their time is up.
- Then there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And on the earth, the nations will be filled with anguish and perplexity due to the roaring and turbulence of the sea. People will be deathly afraid and apprehensive of what is coming upon the whole world, for the forces of the heavens will be shaken.
- Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when you see this all coming to pass, stand up and raise your heads, for you are about to be rescued.

History shows that the people of Judea were indeed scattered among the Gentile nations, and that Jerusalem has been trampled by them throughout. Even

today there is much Gentile control over Jerusalem and the Israelis aren't allowed to build their temple in its ancient location. Of course, there have been many wars and many natural disasters in the last two thousand years.

## Asking the Right Questions

Did anyone desecrate the temple in 70 AD? Though it was burned and dismantled by the armies of Titus, he didn't set up any idol in it. Neither did he take his place in the temple and proclaim himself God, per 2 Thess. 2:3-4 and Rev. 13:1-8, Rev. 14-15.

Did the people of Judea flee to the mountains when they saw Jerusalem surrounded? There is no indisputable record of any mass exodus at that time to the mountains. (The city of Pella, where many Christians are thought to have fled before the siege, is at a fairly low altitude according to [this source](#)). In fact, the Roman armies allowed people into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover but refused to let them leave, in order to put great strain on their resources and supplies during the siege.

Was the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple "sudden" (1 Thes. 5:3, Luke 21:34)? Clearly not; the events leading up to the final siege didn't happen in a day; see [this source](#).

Did Nero, whom some identify as the final fulfillment of the prophecies of both Daniel and Revelation, die as specified in 2 Thess. 2:8 and Rev. 19:19-21? No, he committed suicide (same source). Neither did he or any of his associates cause the whole world (even if limited to the Roman Empire) to take a mark on their forehead or right hand and forbid commerce without it.

Did Jesus return in the clouds, accompanied by all the signs in the sky, and set up his visible earthly kingdom for a thousand years? This should have happened at or very shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD if that event marks the final fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy and Revelation. Yet the only way to claim it happened is to completely spiritualize it, and this is inconsistent with the claim that everything else, such as the destruction and the abomination, was literal and physical.

So while some aspects of the prophecy were fulfilled in 70 AD and others in the ensuing centuries, other important details have yet to occur. We cannot presume that only the unfulfilled parts remain, since we have already seen that Jesus put events such as the Abomination in the future in spite of it having been fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes in the past. So how much of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation remain is anyone's guess. But we should note that the Abomination and fleeing Jerusalem is also seen in Rev. 12 and 13.

However, there are parts of the book of Daniel that have had many details fulfilled in the past. In fact, Dan. 2-7 and 11 have been the most perplexing aspects of the book to critics of Bible prophecy due to their detailed predictions of successive kingdoms. We need to be aware of this, since some mistakenly hold all of it to be yet future and confuse it with modern events. We will now look at those, and then go back to look at another prophecy that remains unfulfilled.

## **Specific Prophecies**

We will look now at particular prophetic visions and messages by chapter, but not in order.

### **Chapter 2**

Ch. 2 is Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue whose head was made of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, lower legs of iron, and feet of a mixture of iron and clay. Daniel identified the head as Nebuchadnezzar himself, king of the Babylonian Empire. After him would follow a lesser kingdom (Medo-Persia, ruled by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian), then another (the Grecian Empire, ruled by Alexander the Great), and finally one that would smash all others (Rome).

It is commonly believed that the two legs represent some kind of division or separation, yet the statue also has two arms and two feet, without anyone presuming such separation. The significance of the statue is in the metals, not the

structure, except for the feet as a mixture of iron and clay. Just as we do not separate the ten toes into two groups of five, so also we should not think that the two lower legs (curiously, the upper legs or thighs are never seen as a division either) represent any division. As for the feet and toes, the text states that the iron and clay represent a divided kingdom of strength and weakness, composed of a mixture of “seeds” (Dan. 2:41-43). Whether this mixture means a clash of cultures and ideologies, or even between humans and semi- or non-humans, the focus is on their inability to blend, not the reason for the inability. The division is between strength and weakness, not east and west.

## Chapter 8

Ch. 8 is a vision about a goat and a ram, and the angel tells Daniel that the ram’s two horns represent the kings of Media and Persia. It describes the conquests of Alexander the Great (“the first king of Greece”), after whose death four of his generals would rule: Lysimachus, Cassander, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. The “little horn” coming later was none other than the vile Antiochus Epiphanes, who didn’t die in battle but from an infestation of worms. There is more detail [here](#).

## Chapter 11

It is the four generals who are described in detail in chap. 11. Ptolemy I was “the king of the south”. The “daughter” was Berenice (actually granddaughter, as her father was Ptolemy II), who was given in marriage to Antiochus II in a doomed plan to achieve political gains by intrigue and deception. After various raids and generations, this “king of the south” was Ptolemy IV and then Ptolemy V.

The “king of the north” was Antiochus III, who as prophesied was utterly defeated in 217 BC. The details fit historical record as with the Ptolemies, right up to the “contemptible person” Antiochus Epiphanes. It is he who is believed to have engineered the murder of “a prince of the covenant”, Onias III, the high priest. The first chapter of the apocryphal book 1 Maccabees details his plundering of the temple and other acts of savagery.

Again, though these things were indeed fulfilled in the past, we cannot dogmatically state that no future fulfillments remain. But neither can we presume that these alliances and military campaigns will be repeated in the future. In all the details of the remaining prophecies given in Revelation, there is no mention of the kings of the north and south and details that would connect them to future events. So though a future fulfillment is possible, it seems most unlikely.

But starting in verse 36 we read of “the king who exalts himself” who has “no regard for the gods of his fathers or the desire of women” and will instead “honor a god of fortresses”. We might still tie him in with the preceding discussion of Antiochus Epiphanes and the kings of the north and south, but these new details have no historical precedent. More importantly, they’re tied in with chapter 12 which begins with “At that time” and includes the resurrection of the dead.

## **Chapter 12**

So it seems that Antiochus Epiphanes is a very clear type or foreshadow of the ultimate future fulfillment in the Antichrist (popular name for the Beast in Revelation). Early in chapter 12 is where we see the phrase Jesus used, “a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then”. There has been much terrible suffering in the world since 70 AD, such that the fall of Jerusalem at that time cannot have been the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy.

But because of this overlap and duality, teachers of Bible prophecy must exercise restraint and caution in looking for modern fulfillments. All we can be sure of is that those things without any historical match will certainly take place.

## **Chapter 7**

The first half of this chapter is a dream about four beasts, and the second half is the interpretation, focusing primarily on the fourth beast. Though the first

three are described as a winged lion, a bear, and a winged leopard, the fourth is not compared to any known animal. It has ten horns, three of which are replaced by another horn. The angel states that this beast will overcome the righteous for 3-1/2 years. The description of the fourth beast exactly matches that of Revelation (e.g. 13:1, 5-8, 17:12-13). Since none of this describes the situation of 70 AD, it must be yet future.

## Chapter 9

Now that we have a good grasp of all that was prophesied through Daniel, we can focus on the Seventy Weeks prophecy of chapter 9, since it lays out a clear sequence for all remaining prophecies about Israel. The first 69 of those weeks was marked as completed when Jesus came. Now seven years remain, divided into two halves at the point where the 7-year treaty is broken by the Abomination. **So when we see this same event in the New Testament, we know that it marks the midpoint of the seven years**, such that 3-1/2 years remain before the return of Jesus to the earth and the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem.

We must not overlook the stated purpose of those Seventy Weeks: to end and atone for sin, begin eternal righteousness, seal up prophecy, and anoint or dedicate the Most Holy Place. These things are all specified as applying to “your people and your holy city”, meaning the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Thus the atonement for sin and end of all prophecy will not be completed until that final seven years ends. This is a very clear and focused prophecy to and about Israel and Jerusalem, rather than the Body of Christ or the world at large. Certainly the judgment of the nations is included on other accounts, but this particular prophecy is very exclusive.

The Seventy Weeks prophecy of Dan. 9:24-27 is easily the most familiar to students of Bible prophecy:

Seventy “sevens” are decreed **for your people and your holy city, to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.**

Know and understand this: **From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes**, there will be **seven** sevens, and **sixty-two** sevens. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. **After the sixty-two sevens, the Anointed One will be put to death** and will have nothing. **The people of the ruler who will come** will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. **He** will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. **In the middle** of the seven **he** will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple **he will set up an abomination** that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on **him**.

To summarize:

1. The prophecy concerns the people of Israel and Jerusalem, **not** the Body of Christ.
2. Purpose: to finish (complete) transgression.
3. Purpose: to put an end to sin.
4. Purpose: to atone for wickedness.
5. Purpose: to bring in everlasting righteousness.
6. Purpose: to seal up (complete) vision and prophecy.
7. Purpose: to anoint the Most Holy Place in the Temple.

The Seventy Weeks would begin when the decree was given (turned out to be Nebuchadnezzar) to rebuild Jerusalem, and it would stop short of the final week when the Messiah would be killed. There would be a prince to come, known now to have been Titus, whose people destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. This is the same event Jesus referred to about not one stone being left upon another (Mat. 24:2), as it was literally fulfilled when the Romans wanted the melted gold that had run between the blocks. **After this event** there would be wars and desolations. **Then after that span of wars** would come **he** who does all of the following:

1. Confirm a 7-year covenant or treaty with “many”

2. Violate the treaty at the midpoint by ending sacrifice and offering in the temple
3. Set up an idol in the temple

Clearly Jesus did not set up any idols, nor make and break any seven-year treaties. The same **he** does all of this.

## Preterism

Preterism is the belief that nothing at all remains of Bible prophecy; anything that seems to remain was actually fulfilled symbolically or metaphorically by the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

We must ask that if the detailed prophecies of the last days are symbolic, what reality do they point to? John was shown a vision of “things that must quickly take place”, but what were the things to be? If they pointed to nothing that could be seen or observed, then why give the prophecy at all, and why in such detail? The whole Revelation is stripped of all meaning and relevance if we were never to take it as a prophecy of real and observable events. The same can be said for Daniel, whose prophecies were undeniably literal (see the book “Daniel in the Critics’ Den” by Sir Robert Anderson, or later similar books by Josh McDowell or Joyce Baldwin).

As a precedent for literal fulfillments we can look to the prophecies of the Messiah, who would both suffer and reign, die and live, be destroyed and live forever. Preterists, using the same principles of interpretation they now use, would not have looked for a literal coming of the Messiah at all, yet in hindsight we cannot deny it. And what did Jesus say to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus? “‘How can you be so ignorant, and so reluctant to believe what the prophets said? Didn’t the Christ have to suffer all these things and then return to his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted all the scriptures that wrote about him.” (Luke 24:25-27)

## Daniel

If preterists accept that the first 69 of Daniel's 70-weeks prophecy were "weeks of years" or 70x7 years, then the last "week" must also be a period of 7 years, rather than 7 days to match the final week of Jesus' mortal life. But nothing happened in that time frame; the Temple was not destroyed until 70 years after Jesus was born, ten times longer than all the other "weeks". No explanation is given for this special treatment.

Some say that the phrase "abomination of desolation" really means that Jesus would destroy the temple defiled by the Jews, 3-1/2 years after he was baptized by John and began his public ministry. Thus he would be the "prince" that would put an end to the sacrifices and offerings halfway through an alleged 7-year covenant begun at his baptism. Yet there are several critical flaws in this argument.

First of all, note the purpose of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27):

1. It concerns the people of Israel and Jerusalem.
2. to finish (complete) transgression.
3. to put an end to sin.
4. to atone for wickedness.
5. to bring in everlasting righteousness.
6. to seal up (complete) vision and prophecy.
7. to anoint the Most Holy Place in the Temple.

Now note the clear sequence of events, regardless of the length of time:

1. Command to rebuild Jerusalem
2. Arrival of the Anointed One
3. Death of the Anointed One
4. Destruction of the city and sanctuary
5. The end comes like a flood
6. Continuing war until the end

7. Desolations
8. “He” confirms a covenant with many for one “seven”
9. The same “he” ends sacrifice and offering at the midpoint
10. The same “he” will do something to the temple, and finally an end is decreed upon “him”. (There is disagreement over whether it should read “abomination that defiles” or “one who causes desolation will come upon the wing of the temple”.)

Preterism necessarily includes a form of Replacement Theology, where most or all of every prophecy concerning the nation of Israel is appropriated by the Body of Christ. So they see the purpose of the prophecy as about figurative, spiritual Israel and not the literal, physical nation. The preterist interpretation of this prophecy could not stand without it.

Even if this were true, the sequence cannot be denied. While all prophetic views largely agree on the first five to seven items, the sticking point is on the identity of “he”; is it Jesus or someone evil? Let’s examine each of the remaining items in the list:

- There is no indication in the Gospels or anywhere else that the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry or his baptism signified the confirmation of any covenant. There is also no firm proof that his ministry lasted 3-1/2 years. And since his ministry began and ended on Passovers, there is no room for a half-year. Jesus himself stated, at the Last Supper, that his **death** would be the signing of a new covenant.
- Sacrifice and offering at the temple did not end at Jesus’ death, resurrection, ascension, or at Pentecost. It was not until the destruction of the city and temple about 40 years later that these things ceased.
- If Jesus was the one who did something to the temple, then what he said in Mat. 24:15 makes no sense: “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel...” The Greek of that verse is unambiguous; something abominable stands in the Holy Place of the temple. And there is no record of people immediately running to the mountains at the sight of Jesus being killed or of the curtain of the Holiest Place being torn in two.

- Conversely, if an evil person were to defile the temple, and if this was future to Jesus and Paul (2 Thes. 2:4) and not already fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes (2nd century BC), then it clearly was not fulfilled in 70 AD since no one went into the temple to be declared God but demolished it instead.

But most critical of all is the undeniable fact that the covenant is not confirmed until **after** the city and sanctuary are destroyed. Even if preterists take Jesus' baptism as the covenant's beginning, it still predates his death. In other words, the sequence according to this argument is as follows:

1. Jesus confirms a covenant with many for one 'seven'.
2. Jesus ends sacrifice and offering at the midpoint.
3. Jesus causes desolation upon the wing of the temple.
4. The city and sanctuary are destroyed.

Either the stated sequence of Daniel is true, or the preterist sequence is true; both cannot be true. Regardless of what or when preterism claims the final "seven" began, it has to happen after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

Yet some preterists hold that this sequence is anything but clear. Operating from the presumption that the prophecy can only be speaking of one particular temple, the events are shuffled according to whether or not the temple is standing. That is,

1. Events of 26–30 AD:
  - Jesus' death (vs. 26a)
  - He confirms a covenant for one 'seven' (vs. 27a)
  - He ends sacrifice and offering midway (vs. 27b)
2. Events of 66–70 AD:
  - Jerusalem and temple destroyed (vs. 26b)
  - War and desolations to the end (vs. 26c)
  - The abominable temple and city are destroyed (vs. 27c)

However, in each sub-list there is a critical error: Why is the death of Jesus before the confirmation of the covenant, which is before the ending of sacri-

fice by his death? Why are Jerusalem and the temple destroyed before the war and desolations, then destroyed again? This too must be shuffled in order to fit Preterist belief.

One wonders how the angel could have made the Preterist interpretation any less clear. And we have precedent for multiple temples, since the one standing in Jesus' day was at least the second. Preterism must also brush off the "span of time" indicators "the end will come... war will continue until the end" as limited to 70 AD. A circular argument always seems airtight.

As for the argument that no physical future temple is prophesied, the claim is that since Christians are "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19), then there has been no physical temple since Pentecost. However, notice that those verses say that we are the temple **of the Holy Spirit**, and the word for temple in all Old Testament prophecies always referred to the physical building wherein the priestly rites would be performed. Also be aware that the temple in Jesus' day **did not have the Ark of the Covenant** in it. That alone should have made it illegitimate according to some, yet Jesus himself worshiped there and observed all the laws of Moses. So this negates the argument that the tribulation temple cannot qualify as being desecrated (per Daniel 9:27) if there is no Ark inside. See [this article](#) for more detail.

## The Gospels

Jesus only mentioned the future *ekklesia* once (Mt. 16:18). His primary mission was to "the lost sheep of Israel" (Mt. 15:24), so we can't presume that all or even most of what He said concerned the coming *ekklesia*. His reference to "other sheep not of this pen" (John 10:16) is the only other clear reference to the gentile believers, again in the future.

If Jesus is to be taken literally when referring to "the abomination of desolation" and the destruction of the Temple and "this generation", then He must also be taken literally when He said all of the following:

- And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Mt. 24:14)

- For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again. (Mt. 24:21)
- Immediately after the distress of those days, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”
- At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (Mt. 24:29-31)

It is another act of desperation to take only some of Jesus’ predictions literally, since there is nothing in the context to indicate a parable or figurative speech. Contrast this with his statement to the Jews in John 2:13-22 after he drove the merchants from the temple. They asked for a sign of His authority and he said he’d “destroy this temple and raise it again in three days”. But John adds, “But the temple he had spoken of was his body.”

## **What did Jesus mean by saying that some in his day would still be living until his kingdom would come?**

- Matthew 16:27-28: “For the Son of Man will surely come in the glory of his Father, along with his angels, and then he will repay each person according to their deeds. I assure you that some here will still be alive to see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”
- Mark 9:1: Jesus continued: “I assure you that some here will definitely be alive to see the Kingdom of God arrive with power.”
- Luke 9:26-27: “For whoever is ashamed of me and what I say, that is someone the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his his glory, and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels. I assure you that some here will still be alive to see the kingdom of God.”

Before each of these passages, Jesus talked about the personal cost of following him, followed immediately by the statement that within a week the Transfiguration took place. But what is meant by “until they see the kingdom of God with power”?

It could refer to the Transfiguration, but this makes nonsense out of Jesus' emphatic statement about it happening long enough in the future that only some would still be alive to see it. Or it could refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, but that was still too soon. Yet if it referred to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD and thereby met the "still alive" criterion, the other details must be allegorized, since Jesus made no glorious appearing, the angels were not seen, and the kingdom of God did not arrive in any visible sense. If the "church" is deemed the kingdom, the problem is that it had already begun on Pentecost.

We should also consider that this phrase about coming in power with the angels is seen as well in the Sheep and Goats passage in Mat. 25:31-46, which would place this arrival at the end of the Tribulation, clearly well beyond any normal mortal lifetime. Rev. 1:7 says, "Look! He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him; those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth will grieve." There are obviously two groups of people here. "Those who pierced him" (the Jews) are distinguished from "every eye" (the Gentiles). The phrase "all the tribes on the earth" is always applied to all the world; see Gen. 12:3, 28:14, Ps. 72:17, and Zech. 14:17.

What are we left with then? Though a more nuanced interpretation is less ideal, it may be the only one to solve the problem. We know that the kingdom was genuinely offered to Israel, but they rejected it, and as a result it was greatly delayed. Could it be that this statement Jesus made was also contingent upon their acceptance of the offer? We have all but ruled out any other possibility, if we remain consistent and reject the easy path of spiritualization.

## Acts

There could not be a clearer statement of delayed prophecy than that of James at the Jerusalem Council: "Israel is being set aside until the Lord takes from among the Gentiles a people for Himself. Then he'll return to rebuild David's fallen tabernacle" (Acts 15:13-18). Israel's "being set aside" was not completed until the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. So if that marks the end of all the prophecies, then the Gentiles were never gathered, because the setting aside must precede the gathering. Neither can the setting aside have been completed

with Jesus' death and resurrection, since it's only afterwards when James says it's "being" set aside (at least present and ongoing, but possibly also future). It's equally clear that "David's fallen tabernacle" had not yet been rebuilt. Israel did not have a sovereign kingdom in the first century, and its presence was not drawing the Gentiles to seek the Lord. Just as Peter's citation of Joel at Pentecost did not see the fulfillment of every detail of the prophecy (e.g., signs in the heavens), so also the gathering of the Gentiles beginning in the first century did not constitute the final fulfillment of Amos 9:11-12 as referenced by James.

## The Letters

Paul wrote, "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us... asserting that the day of the Lord has already come." (2 Thes. 2:1-2) A figurative or symbolic coming would hardly alarm anyone, especially if the judgments to follow were likewise symbolic. The people's very alarm was ample proof that they believed in the literal fulfillment of the coming of the Lord and the Tribulation to follow.

Preterists may argue that the people could only have been fooled if they understood that this was all symbolic, since it was not observable. But again, they were not only fooled but fearful— a reaction that makes no sense if the judgments were likewise symbolic. And once again it would be special pleading to take the signs as symbolic but the persecutions as literal.

## The Revelation

Citing Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus, Eusebius, and Jerome, scholars have determined that the Revelation was seen and written toward the end of the reign of Domitian, the Roman emperor following Nero. Nero died in 68 AD and Domitian in 96 AD ([source](#)). The consensus is that it was seen and written around 95 AD. So the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD was long past and thus not the fulfillment of Revelation. And since there is little doubt that Revelation is referring to the same final "week" as Daniel, it must therefore be that prophecy's final and complete fulfillment.

Some who are not scholars have tried to argue that the references in these writings were ambiguous; e.g. “The problem here is that the word ‘it’ in the Greek could refer to the visions John saw, the book he wrote, or John himself” ([source](#)). But such alleged ambiguities are not mentioned by scholars, and “it” would not refer to John himself.

Preterists may ask why John would not mention the destruction of the Temple if the Revelation post-dated it, but there is no compelling reason for him to do so since this was not a historical record but a vision from God. We might also ask why none of the early “church fathers” mentioned it as being a fulfillment of John’s prophecy.

The letter to Laodicea in Rev. 3:17 treats it as a prosperous city. But it had been ruined by an earthquake around 61 AD, which makes a date during Nero’s reign impossible. Cities could not so quickly be rebuilt, much less return to a high level of prosperity.

Polycarp states that his church, the one in Smyrna, was not even in existence in the days of the apostle Paul, leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. Smyrna is never mentioned in the Book of Acts, or in any other New Testament epistle ([source](#)). How did this church so suddenly appear, and so quickly be slandered by “those who say they are Jews but are not”?

If Nero had been the Antichrist, he would have been destroyed as scripture states in 2 Thes. 2:8 (“whom the Lord will do away with by the breath of his mouth, and will destroy when he appears at his arrival”). But Nero committed suicide, two years before the Temple was destroyed. There is also no evidence that Nero ever set foot in Jerusalem, much less the temple. Neither is there any evidence of a mark on the heads or hands of the people so that they could buy and sell, any time in history. Preterists must somehow justify naming Nero as the literal Antichrist while making everything else about him symbolic — and symbolic of what, they cannot say.

## Conclusion

Preterism can only stand by denying historical evidence for the date of the Revelation, and by inconsistently applying the label of “symbolic” to select scriptures. Paul warned against such teachings in 2 Tim. 2:17b-18: “Among them are Hymeneus and Philetos, who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.”

John was undeniably the last apostle to die, yet he of all people should have been “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thes. 4:17) had all things been fulfilled by 70 AD. There was no return of Jesus to rescue Israel or keep the temple from being destroyed, and clearly Satan has not been bound for a thousand years nor thrown into the Lake of Fire. To say this all happened but life goes on as if it didn’t, is to remove all meaning from words and make it impossible to really know anything at all—including whether Jesus rose from the dead.

### Additional reading:

- Preterism Series
- Preterism’s Inconsistencies

## Prophecies Still to Come

### Introduction

This is an attempt to integrate all remaining Biblical prophecies from both the Old and New Testaments. Too often we err in our interpretations because we’re unaware of the complete scope of things, whether they have to do with Bible prophecy, other Bible topics, or even secular history. So it’s worthwhile to gather all those details together and look for points of similarity as well as difference.

We should also be aware that prophecies aren't always fulfilled or completed at a single point of time. For example, Daniel's prophecy of the Abomination of Desolation was fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes hundreds of years before Jesus came (see Daniel the Prophet), yet Jesus predicted another future fulfillment. This same principle will apply as we study events yet to come. We know, for example, that the Age of Grace (the present age) has had many, but not all, of the characteristics Jesus described for "the beginning of birth pangs". We don't know whether these birth pangs concern the Age of Grace at all.

A study of the separateness of Israel and the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:32) is vital for understanding remaining Bible prophecy, here under Prophecies Still to Come. The bulk of prophecy is focused on the people and land of Israel. But most of what concerns Christians is found in the Letters, with the remainder in the Revelation. So if, for example, we wanted to know whether Christians will suffer any or all of the final judgments, we would not look for this in the Old Testament or even the Gospels. Especially regarding the Seventy Weeks prophecy of Daniel, it was all specified for the people of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple (Dan. 9:24). The first 69 Weeks were for them, and so will be the 70th.

The Age of Grace ends not by a specific date or sign, but by an unknown number. As we can see in Acts 15:16 and Rom. 11:25, God began to turn away from the Hebrew-exclusive era to that of the Gentiles after Jesus returned to heaven. This transitional period ended at the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of the temple, as will be examined later. So anything to do with the nation of Israel was halted, though not abandoned, and will be resumed once the Age of Grace ends.

God seems to focus on one group of his people at a time. He focused on the people of Israel, then interrupted that to turn toward the Gentiles. So when he shifts his focus back toward Israel, he shifts it away from the Body of Christ. If this is accurate, then we should expect Christians to be taken to heaven before the battle of Ezekiel 38 at the latest. But if there is an overlap as between the beginning of the Age of Grace and the destruction of the temple (about forty years), then we may indeed see this battle, which is followed by a period

of seven years with no clear connection to the Seventieth Week of Daniel. However, if prophecies about the return of Israel to the land can apply at least partially to the present time (since 1948), then the period of overlap may be nearly over.

The Body of Christ will not experience the wrath of God (Col. 3:6, 1 Thes. 1:10, 1 Thes. 5:9, Rev. 3:10, Luke 21:36). Please note that the phrase “the wrath of God” can also refer to the general attitude of God toward his enemies in this life, or to the eternal state of such rebels. To determine whether it means the specific time of God’s judgments or “the Day of the Lord”, we must consider the context. But regardless of which meaning one may choose, it’s never directed at Christians.

In general, the Day of the Lord refers to any period of time characterized by the direct and obvious intervention of God. References are Is. 2:12, Is. 13:6,9, Ezk. 13:5, Ezk. 30:3, Joel 1:15, Joel 2:1, Joel 2:11, Joel 2:31, Joel 3:14, Amos 5:18 and 20, Obadiah 15, Zeph. 1:7 and 14, Zech. 14:1, Malachi 4:5, Acts 2:20, 2 Thess. 2:2, 2 Peter 3:10,, Rev. 6:16-17, 11:18, 14:10,19, 15:1 and 7, 16:1, 14, and 19, and Rev. 19:15. Some were fulfilled in the past, but since the past fulfillments weren’t always the same length of time, we cannot say with certainty that the future one(s) will be a certain length of time. Among the future ones, we can see that the beginning of this time is not as sharply defined as we would like.

## **The Age of Grace Ends**

The apostle Paul gave a sequence of events that mark the end of the Age of Grace. He called it The Departure, that is, the “snatch up” or removal of the Restrainer (John 14:2-3, 1 Cor. 15:35-58, 1 Thes. 4:13-18, 2 Thes. 2:1-12):

1. The Lord will descend from heaven
2. The archangel will shout
3. The (last) trumpet of God will sound (ref. also Ex. 19:16-19, Num. 10:2; contrast with Rev. 11:15)
4. Dead Christians will be raised in immortal bodies

5. Bodies of the living Christians will be instantly transformed to immortal
6. All are snatched away into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air
7. This is a message of comfort and hope (no mention of any disasters or world leaders)

Who are “they” who say “peace and safety” in 1 Thes. 5:3, after which there is “sudden destruction”? Whoever is not “you” in the Body of Christ. The way we aren’t caught by surprise is by always being watchful and ready (Phil. 3:20), rather than by somehow knowing the exact date and hour. Keep in mind that Jesus directed his comments toward the people of Israel, not the as-yet unrevealed Body of Christ (Rom. 11:25, Rom. 16:25, Eph. 3:6-9, Col. 1:26-27). So what he said about watching and being ready, as well as praying to escape (Luke 21:36), was for them and not us. But of course, Christians of all times are to be eager to see Jesus return, and to live so that we won’t be ashamed when he does; this is taught throughout the Letters.

## The Transitional Battles

The geography and ethnic groups cited in these passages are identifiable and have the motivation expected of the era before the Tribulation. It’s highly unlikely that this would be the case afterwards.

- Destruction of Damascus (Is. 17) – It will suddenly lie in ruins, replaced by grazing flocks, when the glory of Israel has faded almost completely, and then people turn back to God.
- Intent of nations bordering Israel to wipe it out (Ps. 83) – Enemies of Israel band together to wipe it off the map: Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Agrites, Byblos, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia, Tyre, and Assyria. These correspond roughly to modern-day Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Gaza, Syria, northern Iraq, and possibly parts of Egypt.
- Gog (the title of the ruler) of Magog (his land) and nations around Mediterranean Sea intend to take spoil from a nation recovered from war (Ezk. 38-39; weapons used as fuel for 7 years afterwards). The contrasts between this battle and the one in Rev. 20:8-9 at the end of the Millennium are the sources of the armies (certain nations vs. all the nations of the world) and the manner in which the armies are defeated

(earthquake, attacking each other, plague, rain, hail, and sulfur vs. fire from heaven). Magog was populated by the descendants of Japheth who went to the area now known as Russia, though some hold that all these nations are in Asia Minor. Meshech and Tubal refer to areas north and east of Magog, Persia is modern Iran, Cush and Put are northern Africa, Gomer settled along the Danube River in modern eastern Europe, and Togarmah settled in Turkey.

We don't know whether Christians will be on earth to witness these things, as they may well take place before the enforcement of the seven-year treaty that marks the beginning of the Tribulation. There was an overlap between the beginning of the Age of Grace at Pentecost and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, so it's possible that Christians may see these battles. However, though the duration of the battles is unknown and their relationship to the seven-year treaty is also unknown, they would still be a sign to us that our Departure is very near.

So while this doesn't technically violate the signlessness of our Departure, remember that even the apostle Paul believed it could happen without warning in his own day. Otherwise he would have included these events in his sequential list given to the Thessalonians. In fact, the second letter was written to counter a forgery that claimed the Day of the Lord had already arrived (2 Thes. 2:1-2). They would not have been fooled if they knew the battles listed above had to happen first, and Paul doesn't make any mention of them there.

## **Jesus' Public Statement About the End Times**

When Jesus' disciples remarked about the magnificence of the temple, he told them that it would be destroyed to the point where not one block rested on another (Dan. 9:26b, Mt. 24:2, Mk. 13:1-2, Lk. 21:5-6). This was said publicly, while they were still on the temple grounds (Mt. 24:1), and it was fulfilled by the Roman ruler Titus in 70 AD. Everything else was said privately at a later time. It's possible that the prophecy about the people of Judea fleeing when they would see Jerusalem surrounded by encampments was at least partially fulfilled at this time, though it was largely only the Christians who es-

aped. And it should be noted that Titus didn't set up any idol in the temple, nor go into it and declare himself God.

## Jesus' Private (Olivet) Discourse to Peter, James, John, and Andrew

Mt. 24:3a and Mk. 13:3 tell us that the Olivet Discourse was given privately to Jesus' inner circle of disciples. They asked three questions (Mt. 24:3b, Mk. 13:4, Lk. 21:7), after which Jesus gave a lengthy response:

1. When will these things happen?
2. What is the sign of your arrival?
3. What is the sign of the end of the age?

### General Introduction (Mt. 24:33)

Jesus gave his disciples certain signs to look for as the arrival of the Kingdom of God drew near. Remember that these were signs for Israel and concern the prophecies for Israel, rather than for Christians. And it's the arrival of the Kingdom of God that the disciples asked about, which is preceded by the Day of the Lord. That Day will begin suddenly and without warning, while people are going about their daily lives.

- Signs to watch for (Mt. 24:32-33, Mk. 13:28-29, Lk. 21:28-31). When you see all these things, **the Kingdom of God** is near:
  - false Christs and prophets
  - wars nearby and reports of distant wars
  - famines
  - earthquakes
  - lawlessness and cold-bloodedness
  - gospel of the Kingdom proclaimed worldwide
  - Jerusalem surrounded
  - the Abomination of Desolation

- the Great Tribulation
- dark sun and moon
- stars fall
- the Sign of the Son of Man
- the Son of Man coming in the clouds
- trumpet blast for angels to gather the chosen people from all over the heavens
- This generation (Mt. 24:34-35, Mk. 13:30-31, Lk. 21:32-33) will not pass before it all takes place. Debate rages over the meaning, but it will include the appearance of “all these things”, meaning the signs Jesus had just given to signal the arrival of the Kingdom of God. And since these things didn’t happen in the first century, “this generation” cannot refer to the one of Jesus’ day. Then the question is whether it refers to the whole nation of that time, or to the lifespan of people born then. Even if it’s the latter, we cannot say with any certainty what the length of that generation may be, or exactly when the signs began to appear. Thus date-setting is futile. It would be reasonable to take it to mean that the Day of the Lord will not span a generation; in fact, we know from Daniel that it will last seven years.
- No one knows the day or hour (Mt. 24:36, Mk. 13:32-33, Lk. 21:34-35) for the arrival of the Kingdom of God.
  - Like days of Noah (Mt. 24:37-39, Lk. 17:26-27)
  - Like days of Lot (Lk. 17:28-29)
  - Taken or left (Mt. 24:40-41, Lk. 17:30-35). In context, this applies to when the people of Judea flee upon seeing the Abomination of Desolation. This context also includes the examples of Noah and Lot, where the righteous were taken and the wicked left to suffer judgment.
  - So watch (Mt. 24:42-44, Mk. 13:37, Lk. 21:36a)
  - Pray to escape (Mt. 24:20, Lk. 21:36b)
  - When least expected (Mt. 24:45-51, Mk. 13:34-36). There are two possible ways for not expecting something to happen: (1) presuming it will not come in our day, and (2) losing hope. But Jesus indicates that while the people of Israel still believe their Master will return, they expect him to come at a much later time.

- The ten virgins analogy (Mt. 25:1-13). Again, this is not for Christians but for Israel. Jesus gave another indication about some of them being excluded from the Kingdom of God in Mat. 8:11-12.
- The good and bad servants (Mt. 25:14-30)

## **Beginning of Birth pangs / Seal Judgments (Mt. 24:8, Mk. 13:8d)**

- False Christs (Mt. 24:4-5, Mt. 24:11,23-28, Mk. 13:5-6, Lk. 17:23, Lk. 21:8, Rev. 6:1-2)
- Wars/uprisings (Dan. 9:26d, Mt. 24:6-7a, Mk. 13:7-8a, Luke 21:9-10, Rev. 6:3-4)
- Famines (Mt. 24:7b, Mk. 13:8c, Luke 21:11b, Rev. 6:5-6)
- Plagues (Mt. 24:7b-8, Luke 21:11c, Rev. 6:7-8)
- Earthquakes (Mt. 24:7b,9, Mk. 13:8b, Luke 21:11a, Rev. 6:12a)
- Black sun, red moon, stars fall, sky recoils (Joel 2:30-31, Rev. 6:12-17)

## **The Tribulation / Trumpet Judgments (Dan. 9:26c, Mt. 24:14b)**

- Treaty enforced for seven years (Dan. 9:27a)
- Beast/prince deceives the world (2 Thes. 2:9-11, Rev. 13:14)
- Persecution (Mt. 24:9, Mk. 13:9,11, Lk. 21:12-18, Rev. 6:9-11)
- False prophets (Mt. 24:11)
- Strife/cold-bloodedness (Mt. 24:10,12, Mk. 13:12-13a)
- Endurance for salvation (Mt. 24:13, Mk. 13:13b, Lk. 21:19, Rev. 13:9-10)
- Gospel of Kingdom (Mt. 24:14a, Mk. 13:10, Rev. 14:6)

## **The Great Tribulation / Bowl Judgments (Mt. 24:21)**

- The Abomination of Desolation (Dan. 9:27b, Mt. 24:15, Mk. 13:14a, Rev. 13:5,15 [at or after 7th trumpet])

- The ruler who commits the Abomination:
  - Called the Son of Perdition, the Man of Lawlessness, the Beast (Dan. 7:7-8,11, 2 Thes. 2:3b, Rev. 13:1-8, Rev. 17:12-13)
  - (The name Antichrist [1 John 2:18] is actually better applied to the False Prophet / Second beast of Rev. 13)
  - Will perform miracles (2 Thes. 2:9-10, Rev. 19:20a)
  - Claims to be above all gods and sets himself in the temple of God (Dan. 11:36, 2 Thes. 2:4)
  - Has no regard for the gods of his ancestors or the one favored by women (Dan. 11:37; this is not saying he will be homosexual, since the context is about gods)
  - Honors a god of forces/fortresses and a “foreign” god (Dan. 11:38-39)
  - Fights kings of north and south, invades many nations, takes great plunder (Dan. 11:40-43)
  - Alarming reports from east and north will cause him to destroy many more nations in a great rage (Dan. 11:44)
  - Will make camp near the Mediterranean Sea and “holy mountain”, but he will meet his end there and will be defeated by the breath from the Lord Jesus (Dan. 11:45, 2 Thes. 2:8)
- Judeans must flee to mountains (Mt. 24:16-20, Mk. 13:14b-18, Lk. 17:30-33, 21:20-22, Rev. 12:6 [for 1,260 days])
- This is the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7)
- Battle outside of Jerusalem (Rev. 14:19-20)
- Jerusalem plundered (Zech. 14:1-2)
- Unprecedented suffering (Dan. 12:1, Mt. 24:21-22, Mk. 13:19-20, Lk. 21:23-24)
- False Christs and prophets (Mt. 24:23-26, Mk. 13:21-23)
- Gather in Valley of Megiddo (trad. Battle of Armageddon, though no battle actually happens; Joel 3:1-2, Joel 12-14, Rev. 16:16)

## **After the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:29a, Mk. 13:24a)**

- Cosmic disasters (Is. 13:10, Is. 24:20, Is. 34:4, Joel 2:31, Joel 3:15, Mt. 24:29b, Mk. 13:24-25, Lk. 21:11, Lk. 21:25-26, Rev. 16:18-20)
  - Sun and moon dark
  - Stars fall from sky
  - Powers of heavens shaken, sky recoiled
  - Fear over roaring of sea
  - Mountains and islands shifted
- Sign of Son of Man in sky (Mt. 24:30a)
- Descent of Son of Man in clouds (Mt. 24:27,30b, Mk. 13:26, Lk. 17:24,21:27, Rev. 19:11-14)
- Lord's army arrives, Bride and Bridegroom leave chambers (Joel 2)
- The Lord stands on Mt. of Olives, splitting it in two, and fights against all the nations (Zech. 14:3-5)
- Defeat of Beast (2 Thes. 2:8, Rev. 19:15,21)
- Where body is, vultures gather (Mt. 24:28, Lk. 17:36-37, Rev. 19:17-21)
- Beast and False Prophet thrown alive into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20b)
- Satan imprisoned (Rev. 20:1-3)
- Trumpet blast, angels harvest the elect (Mt. 24:31, Mk. 13:27)
- Sheep and goats (Mt. 7:21-23, Mk. 25:31-46, Lk. 13:24-30)

## **The Millennium**

- Israel re-established in land, restored earthly Jerusalem and temple (Ezk. 36-37, Ezk. 40-48, Jer. 30:10, Jer. 16-24, Amos 9:11-15)
- Rule by Christ and the souls of those who refused to worship the Beast or take its mark (Rev. 20:4)

## **After the Millennium**

- Satan released (Rev. 20:7)

- Final battle of Gog/Magog but from all nations around the world (Rev. 20:8-9a)
- Satan's world-wide army destroyed by fire (Zech. 14:12-13, Rev. 20:9b)
- Satan in Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10)
- New heavens and new earth without any sea (Rev. 21:1)
- New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2, Rev. 21:9-22:5)

## **Prophecy Fads and Misconceptions**

### **The Muslim Beast**

One modern prophecy fad is to believe that the coming Beast will be the Muslim Mahdi (or Twelfth Imam). But can this be supported from scripture?

First of all, we need to distinguish between the Beast and the Antichrist. There are two beasts mentioned in Revelation: the First Beast and the Second Beast or False Prophet. The first is strictly political and will be the one possessed by Satan at the midpoint of the Tribulation, desecrating the temple and declaring himself God. The second has to do with religion and would thus be the only one to qualify as an antichrist. This is the one who will demand that everyone worship the First Beast, and who will order the Mark to be enforced (see next section).

So the only possible connection of Islamic prophecy to the end times would be to the False Prophet. But since no Muslim would pretend to be Allah, their Mahdi would not demand that the world worship anyone on earth. But will either of the Beasts be Muslim, even if not the Mahdi? After all, the method of execution for many will be beheading (Rev. 20:4). However, this one fact is hardly enough to identify the False Prophet as a Muslim. This is during the second half of the Tribulation, after the False Prophet has demanded that the whole world worship the First Beast, who has declared himself God. Thus the beheadings of Rev. 20:4 can have nothing to do with Islam. It may well be that beheading is simply the preferred Satanic method of execution.

Does scripture support someone of Muslim heritage who simply apostatizes? That is, can we trace the lineage of either of the Beasts arising from either Islam or a nation that practices it? In the Seventy Weeks prophecy of Daniel, we're told that there is a coming "prince". It was to be the **people** of this prince that would destroy the temple, which happened in 70 AD. The Roman army often included people of many ethnicities, but the lineage of those people does not necessarily apply to the prince himself. So who was the prince? The Roman general Titus. He was neither Arab nor Muslim, since Islam was not invented until the 600s AD. While one might point to the Ottoman Empire as having ruled the general area out of which the Beasts might come, the Roman Empire was always ruled by Europeans. The type or shadow of the Beast, Antiochus Epiphanes, was a Roman of Greek lineage. As for the False Prophet, nothing at all is said about his lineage or people.

But what did Jesus mean when he said in John 5:43, "I have come with the authority of my Father and you won't accept me, but if someone comes by their own authority you'll accept them"? Many believe this means the Antichrist will be a Jew. Now since many Jews will reject the Beast when he desecrates the temple, it could only apply to those who remain. However, Rev. 13:1 says the First Beast arises out of the sea, which symbolizes the non-Jewish nations. Rev. 13:11 says that the Second Beast arises out of the land, which symbolizes the people of Israel. Yet it's the First Beast who enforces the 7-year treaty.

There is a book by Phillip Goodman called *The Assyrian Connection* that proposes a Syrian (Micah 5:5) as the Antichrist. He argues that the Antichrist will arise out of the eastern leg of the old Roman Empire, an area presently dominated by Islam. But none of the passages to which he appeals clearly point to either the coming Antichrist or the then non-existent religion of Islam. Not even Antiochus Epiphanes, who first fulfilled the prophecy of the Abomination of Desolation, was Assyrian. Even so, the phrase "the Assyrian" could be an expression meaning "the Assyrian people", just as we might say that "the American" is going to rise up against tyranny. More details and theories can be found at [this article](#). (Disclaimer: Walid Shoebat was never really a terrorist or an expert on Bible prophecy.)

Perhaps the strongest argument against a Muslim Antichrist is that the present Islamic nations will be wiped out either early in the Tribulation or just before it start. In fact, all religions will be outlawed when the Beast declares himself God, including the ancient Babylonian religion. The Antichrist will not be an atheist, but neither will he be identified with any former religion. Islam certainly is serving a Satanic purpose and supplies the motivation for the Psalm 83 coalition against Israel, but it will not be a significant entity in the Tribulation, nor will the Antichrist or either of the Beasts be Islamic.

## The Mark of the Beast

Revelation 13:17 so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

Revelation 14:9 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand...”

What is the Mark? The beast’s name or number. It is **not** our personal ID. Even if the world went back to using beads for currency, this mark would still be required to do business. So technology doesn’t matter, it’s whether this Mark represents your willing citizenship in the Beast’s kingdom.

How is the Mark given? Etched on the forehead or right hand. Why these two locations? The most likely reason is that it refers to the Beast’s withered right arm and blind right eye (Zech. 11:17).

When is it given? After the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15). How do we know when the seventh trumpet has been sounded? Following is a list of the judgments of the trumpets in order, by chapter and verse in Revelation. We will not see the Mark of the Beast until after all of those things have happened. So since not even the first trumpet has sounded, we aren’t even close to seeing the Mark of the Beast.

1. 8:6-7 (1) Hail, fire, 1/3 earth burned
2. 8:8-9 (2) Blazing mountain, 1/3 sea destroyed

3. 8:10-11 (3) Burning star Wormwood, 1/3 rivers embittered
4. 8:12-13 (4) Heavenly bodies' light reduced by 1/3
5. 9:1-12 (5) First woe on earth: Locusts from the Abyss torment enemies of God for five months
6. 9:13-21 (6) Second woe on earth: Four Messengers, 200 million soldiers, 1/3 population killed
7. 11:1-14 temple measurements and two witnesses
8. 11:15-14:20 (7) Third woe on earth: the two Beasts

Some people think that any and all references to beasts in the Bible can be applied to this context, such that pretty much anyone and anything can be called the Mark of the Beast. By this method, even Israel or Jesus would qualify. The foolishness of this idea is obvious; it's only being mentioned because there are actually people who think this is how the Bible should be interpreted.

## The Two Witnesses

Rev. 11:1-12 describes them as individual human beings with miraculous powers, who wear sackcloth and prophesy for 3-1/2 years. This is the same description found in Zech. 4:3, Zech. 11, and Zech. 14. They are killed by the Beast during the 6th trumpet judgment, left in the center of Jerusalem for 3-1/2 days, raised back to life by God, and then taken up to heaven while their enemies watch.

Anyone and anything that doesn't match all these criteria is not either of the Two Witnesses. So they aren't Israel and the Body of Christ, nor any random political leaders, nor the Old and New Testaments, nor any other off-the-wall candidate.

## Blood Moons, Tetrads, and Shemitah Years

A "blood moon" is simply a lunar eclipse where conditions are such that the moon appears reddish in color. A tetrad is when four such eclipses occur in a row. A Shemitah year is so named for the command to Israel to let their fields

remain unplowed every seventh year so the land could rest. This is strictly for Israel, not anyone else, and none of the curses for failure to observe these years apply to any other nation.

None of these concepts are part of Bible prophecy. Phrases such as “the moon will turn to blood and the sun to darkness” are indeed found in scripture, but each context shows that they aren’t routine astronomical events, and they happen at the same time as the darkening or falling of the stars. One way all of these things could happen at once is during a volcanic eruption where the sky is blocked out, and another would be divine intervention. But the normal astronomical events cannot all happen at the same time.

Theories such as those promoted by Mark Biltz or Rabbi Jonathan Cahn leave out any tetrads that didn’t occur on a significant date in history, and not all of the ones that did were before the events they allegedly pointed to. This is cherry-picking the data and fudging the dates. They also lead us to wonder why the biggest events, such as the Holocaust, were not foretold by any such signs.

Scripture does say that the heavenly bodies serve as signs and to count off years, but this hardly means that every alignment of stars or every tetrad is a prophetic sign. So there is no reason to think that the latest astronomical alignments or phenomena are foretelling world events. One must be careful when connecting dots.

## **Mystery Babylon**

There are plenty of theories as to the identity of “Mystery Babylon”. But let’s look at the Biblical description and see what it actually says.

1. She sits on many waters (Rev. 17:1) but is in the desert (Rev. 17:3a)
2. She rides the red beast with 7 heads and 10 horns (Rev. 17:3b)
3. She wears royal robes and carries a chalice holding the filth of her promiscuity (Rev. 17:4)

4. She has written on her forehead a secret name, “Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and everything disgusting” (Rev. 17:5; the Greek says a secret name, not that the name is Mystery Babylon)
5. She is drunk with the blood of the holy people and martyrs or witnesses of Jesus (Rev. 17:6a)

After John sees this vision, the angel explains what it symbolizes. And since the angel does this, there is no reason or justification for taking the answers as symbols.

1. The **beast** preceded the time of John, was **not** in power in his time, and will arise again from the Abyss (Rev. 17:8a), and is also the 8th king (Rev. 17:11)
2. The **heads** represent mountains which are kings; 5 have fallen, one **was** currently in power, and one will come later (Rev. 17:9-10)
3. The **ten horns** represent ten kings who have not yet come (Rev. 17:12a) and will hate and destroy the woman (Rev. 17:16)
4. The **many waters** the woman sits upon represent many nations of people (Rev. 17:5)
5. The **woman** represents “that great **city** that **has** sovereignty over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18), who has gained wealth by trafficking in all sorts of goods as well as human beings (Rev. 18:11-13)

The angel does not give the meaning of the desert. It may simply mean the place where John saw the vision, but it could also refer to the site of the ancient city of Babylon in the plains of Shinar (Gen. 10:10), which is in Mesopotamia, in modern Iraq, about 30 miles south of Baghdad (see [Bible Atlas](#)). It may also be related to a vision in Zechariah 5:5-11, where a personification of evil is carried to Shinar to be set in place. The city was built by Nimrod, who rebelled against God and established his own religion, which came to be the source of the worship of Horus and Semiramis, and their various names including Baal and the Queen of Heaven. **So Babylon is both a literal city and the root of all false religion.**

Who or what is the **Beast/8th king**? It could not be Rome, since Rome was in power in John’s day. Yet it had to exist before John, and so it’s not any king-

dom, state, or power that hasn't existed in ancient times. And since it has carried the woman, it must be as old as she is.

Who are the **seven kings**? Five of them preceded the time of John, one was in power in his time, and one was yet to come. Ten legitimate Roman emperors preceded the time of John, and the eleventh in his time was Domitian. Further, it seems unlikely that the angel would be talking about a line of kings from a single kingdom. So the seven kings represent kings and their kingdoms. Now we look for five empires before Rome, and the most likely were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. But who or what will be the final empire? All the kings have had something to do with the Beast, so what do they all have in common? **They are all powers that ruled the known world.** The Beast will be the final world empire, with roots that go back to ancient times. There is nothing in the text to identify it as “the city on seven hills”.

Who are the **ten kings**? They will be from kingdoms that have not existed in the past, and they will be all of one kingdom, since the word for kingdom in Rev. 17:12 is singular. They will share their power with the eighth king for a short time, likely half the Tribulation.

Of what significance are the **many waters**? They represent the population of the world and are under the authority of the woman, not the beast. What has the beast “carried” since ancient times, and will throw off and destroy? The most likely answer is **ancient Babylonian religion.** We know that the Beast will do away with the worship of any god or king but himself at the midpoint of the Tribulation, so that's when religious Babylon is destroyed.

What is “that great **city** that **has** (in the first century) sovereignty over the kings of the earth”, that will still be in power during the Tribulation? It cannot be a country, but it has to be doing diplomacy around the world just like a country; that is, it's a city-state. It must also be guilty of shedding the blood of the holy people. So we can eliminate any modern city without ancient roots, such as New York or London. The only city-state that could qualify would be either the literal city of Babylon, or another city that has been **the headquarters of a revived ancient Babylonian religion.** Many believe the Bible pre-

dicts a one-world religion, but this is not the case; the only world religion will be to worship the Beast.

Has this city ever moved in the past, so we could justify saying that it's not the **name** of the city but its **characteristics** that identify it as an entity that existed in the first century and will exist again? We have a clue in Rev. 2:13, in the letter to the Congregation in Pergamos, described as the city "where Satan has his throne". This is where the priests of the Babylonian religion moved after their city was destroyed. Quoting Harry Ironside in [Babylonian Religion](#):

When Christ came into this world the mystery of iniquity was everywhere holding sway, save where the truth of God as revealed in the Old Testament was known. Thus, when the early Christians set out upon the great task of carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth, they found themselves everywhere confronted by this system, in one form or another; for though Babylon as a city had long been but a mystery, her mysteries had not died with her.

When the city and temples were destroyed, the high-priest fled with a company of initiates and their sacred vessels and images to Pergamos, where the Symbol of the serpent was set up as the emblem of the hidden wisdom. From there, they afterwards crossed the sea and immigrated to Italy, where they settled on the Etruscan plain. There the ancient cult was propagated under the name of the Etruscan Mysteries and eventually Rome became the headquarters of Babylonianism.

The chief priests wore mitres shaped like the head of a fish, in honor of Dagon, the fish-god, the Lord of life-another form of the Tammuz mystery, as developed among Israel's old enemies, the Philistines. The chief priest when established in Rome took the title Pontifex Maximus, and this was imprinted in on his mitre. When Julius Caesar (who was an initiate like all young Romans of good family) had become the head of the States, he was elected Pontifex Maximus, and this title was held henceforth by all the Roman emperors down to Constantine the Great, who was at one and the same time, head of the church, and high priest to the heathen. The title was afterwards

conferred upon the bishops of Rome, and is borne by the pope today, who is thus declared to be, not the successor of the fisherman-apostle Peter, but the direct successor of the high priest of the Babylonian mysteries, and the servant of the fish-god Dagon, for whom he wears, like his idolatrous predecessors, the fisherman's ring.

So the city may change names and locations, but its character as the headquarters of the ancient mystery religion remains the same. Remember that this is the **woman** and not the **beast**. The **woman** is the Babylonian religion headquartered in a city-state that has existed in one place or another over the centuries; the **beast** is the world government; the **seven heads** are a line of world emperors; the **ten crowns** are new kings of one world kingdom who hand their power to the beast. Keep in mind also that every kingdom has a king; every empire has an emperor. So though the Beast is a kingdom, it's headed by a man, whose names include "the son of perdition" and "the man of lawlessness".

## Prophetic Cities

The focus here is on future prophetic cities: The Lord Is There (formerly Jerusalem) on earth during the Millennium (Zech. 14, Ezk. 40-48, named in 48:35), and the New Jerusalem in the new heaven/earth for eternity (Rev. 21). To compare the two, we must first calculate their respective sizes. No dimensions are given for the Jerusalem of Zech. 14.

Converting cubits to miles:

- 1 mile = 63,360 inches
- 1 cubit = 21 inches (approx.)
- $(\text{cubits} * 21) / 63,360 = \text{miles}$

There are disagreements as to the precise lengths of cubits and other terms used in scripture, but these differences are not significant. See [Bible Gateway](#) for a comparison of several translations. **Note that "wide" means north to south.** Studies referenced will include the following:

1. Ezekiel 47
2. Ezekiel 48
3. Isaiah 65
4. Gates of Jerusalem
5. Gates of Jerusalem

## Similarities and Differences

Both cities have twelve gates, three on each side, named after the tribes of Israel (which has not been the case for Jerusalem thus far):

- **NORTH:** Reuben, Judah, Levi
- **EAST:** Joseph, Benjamin, Dan
- **SOUTH:** Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun
- **WEST:** Gad, Asher, Naphtali

Both have a tree or trees along a river, bearing fruit each month for food and leaves for healing. But the length, width, and height of the New Jerusalem are all 12,000 stadia or 1400 miles. The wall is 144 cubits or 252 feet thick. So the New Jerusalem is far too large to be confused with The Lord Is There; it is much larger than the entirety of the land of Israel.

The rivers are different as well. It flows from center of the New Jerusalem, but from the south side of the millennial temple. It goes to an unknown destination from the New Jerusalem, but to the Dead and Mediterranean Seas in the sacred allotment.

Other differences include the fact that there are no seas on the new earth (Rev. 21:1), while the Millennial Kingdom has known seas. In the new heavens and earth there is no night and no need for the luminaries, while the Millennial Kingdom has New Moon festivals and references “six working days”. We know the location of the Millennial Kingdom, but not the New Jerusalem or anything about the geography of the new earth. See also [this study](#), especially verses 3-5, second paragraph, regarding topographical changes between The Lord Is There and Jerusalem as we've known it.

Notice the “prince” mentioned in Ezek. 40-48. Whoever this may be, this person will be **mortal** since the passages speak of his children. This person also **does not perform the functions of a priest**. Neither can this be King David, since David died long ago rather than being taken alive to heaven as were Enoch and Elijah. And **David was promised that someone from his line would always be on the throne of Israel**, so this person will be from his line.

Consider also the vision in Ezekiel 43:7, where God says from within the temple, “This is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever”. The temple has not yet been built. Its stated purpose will be to shame the people of Israel for their former practices and defilement. It would seem unlikely that such a shaming and lesson for Israel would be perpetuated for eternity. And the sacrifices and festivals aren’t identical to those prescribed by Moses.

## Analysis

Since The Lord Is There and the New Jerusalem are so vastly different in size, we would have to conclude that they're separate cities even if every other detail were the same. The only real question, then, is whether The Lord Is There is the new, eternal name for Jerusalem or a separate city.

If they're *separate* cities, we must ask why Ezekiel never speaks of Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom, and where Jerusalem might be since The Lord Is There seems to be in the same spot. But if they're the *same* city, then we must ask why the river flows from the city in one instance (Zech. 14:8) but from the temple in another (Ezk. 47:1), and why Ezekiel only mentions the river flowing to the Dead Sea (Ezk. 47:8) while Zechariah says it splits and half goes to the Mediterranean (Zech. 14:8).

The only other reference to a future Jerusalem is Isaiah 65:17-25, in a context where there is mortality, though in a time of great abundance and peace. This would seem to match Zech. 14, except for the statement “new heavens and new earth”, which is mentioned in Rev. immediately before the New Jerusalem descends from heaven. Yet the statement in Isaiah 65 does not say that this new heaven and earth precedes the restoration of Jerusalem, but that

God “will create” them. Yet on the other hand, everything in that passage “will be”. But given the sequential character of Revelation as opposed to the other passages, it would seem that the order of events is clearer there and should carry more weight. See also [StudyLight.org](http://StudyLight.org):

The designation new heavens and a new earth is applied to the Millennial kingdom only as a stage preliminary to the eternal glories of heaven (the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21; Revelation 22)— just as Pentecost was to be regarded (Acts 2:17) as ushering in the “last days”, although it occurred at least nineteen centuries before the Second Advent. [Note: Archer, p. 653.]

Regarding the literalness of all this, chapters 1-24 of Ezekiel predict the captivity of Israel, chapters 25-32 predict the judgment of the other nations, chapters 33-39 predict the return of Israel to its land, and chapters 40-48 predict the Millennial Kingdom. Since all the fulfilled prophecies have been literal, there is no justification for treating the remaining prophecies as figurative or only spiritual. See also [this study guide](#):

iii. The student of Ezekiel’s prophecy is struck again and again with the mass of details and particulars that characterize the last nine chapters of the book. This is the strongest and most irrefutable argument against taking these chapters in an allegorical or symbolical or spiritualizing sense. (Feinberg)

## Two Prophetic Paths

We must understand the unique identities and destinies of Israel and the Body of Christ or Christian community/congregation. Bible prophecy interpretation depends upon whether or not Israel was to retain its identity beyond its dispersion in 70 AD. Those who see Israel as having been abandoned forever by God will interpret all remaining prophecies as applying to the Body of Christ (yet they accept only Israel’s blessings and not its curses). But those who see Israel as having been given irrevocable promises by God interpret all remaining prophecies about Israel as literal.

So first we must know what God promised to Israel. In Jeremiah 31:37 we're told that God will never reject the people of Israel in spite of all they've done, and in Ezekiel 36:22-23 it states very clearly that the purpose is to prove God holy in spite of their habit of giving him a bad name among the nations of the world. We see in those and other passages that God is not yet finished with Israel, since **his purposes do not depend upon the faith of its people**. In fact, God states clearly that Israel has profaned his name and made him the object of scorn among the Gentiles. So the argument that Israel today is not the chosen people of God is invalid, since it has nothing to do with their merit. God has scattered them before but brought them back again, so there's no reason to presume that he won't do so in the future.

**This doesn't just concern the people, either, but also the land.** The original land of Israel was determined by God Himself: "the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites" (Ex. 3:8, 13:5, etc.) This area is currently known as Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, part of Turkey, and Israel, including Gaza and the West Bank. God promised this area to Abraham's descendants.

Clearly, both the land and people of Israel belong to God. In their present state of unbelief and hostility to their own Messiah, they must be purged and purified. **But it will be by the hand of God, not Christians or Gentiles, since whoever comes against God's people comes against him** (Zech. 2:8). So while we're not obligated to support or condone what they're doing as a nation, neither are we to attack or condemn them — as if we or any other nations have a right to point fingers at others.

There is ample archaeological evidence of these ancient Hebrew cities, culture, artifacts, and language (see [this pro-Israel source](#) and [this anti-Israel source](#)). Yet there's no evidence for any such people as Palestinians; there's no coinage, no inscriptions, no language, nothing. It's often and loudly claimed that a so-called Palestinian people had prior occupancy, yet not even the Dome of the Rock was built until 691 AD. A.C. Cresswell in his book *Origin of the plan of the Dome of the Rock* notes that those who built the shrine used the measurements of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which of course was preceded by Israel (see [this book](#), and [this article](#)).

Now we must address the charge that none of the people in Israel today are true Jews by descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but are Khazars and thus the fake Jews spoken of in the book of Revelation. Though this may be provable genetically for some of the people, it's not true of all of them. Neither is it true that all of them are atheists, Kabbalists, or occultists. Yet God spares his people no matter how small the number ("remnant"), and the land still belongs to God. In addition, Gentiles were always allowed to convert to Judaism and given full rights as Jews (Isaiah 56:3-8). So even if the people of Israel today were proven to lack genetic descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this doesn't prevent them from being considered the people of God.

To answer yet another charge, the establishment of modern Israel by ordinary political means doesn't mean it isn't a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Was God supposed to just have us all wake up one morning to see that there was a nation of Israel? How else would anyone accept that God had something to do with it? The fact that Israel's existence in the future was predicted long ago is proof enough that this is of God— though Israel did in fact appear suddenly, per Isaiah 66:8.

A question for Christians who say that God has broken his promises to Israel due to unbelief: What makes them think God won't also break his promises to Christian communities whose people lack faith or keep indulging in sin? Many congregations today are filled with corruption and worldly hedonism; they have relegated the Bible to myth or irrelevance in the modern world; they embrace all the depravity of the wicked and mock the few voices of rebuke and calls to holiness. If God can abandon Israel, then God can also abandon us. Those who smugly say that God is finished with Israel should not think God won't turn his back on them as well.

Having established the foundation of Bible prophecy as that God won't abandon Israel, it follows that the remaining prophecies about the people and land of Israel will be literally fulfilled. Israel and the Body of Christ have separate destinies and purposes, as explained by both Peter and James in Acts 15, and by Paul in 1 Cor. 10:32 where he lists "Jews, Greeks (Gentiles), and the Congregation of God". Though there is but one Kingdom of Heaven, there are various "provinces" depending on when a righteous person lived (see Dispen-

sationalism, along with articles [here](#) and [here](#)). **If God can break his promises to Israel, he can break them to us, and none of his promises would mean anything.** Thus so-called Replacement Theology, whether the Body of Christ replaces Israel or the Body of Christ is absorbed into Israel and must obey the Levitical law, means that God does not keep his promises to glorify his name rather than ours. So prophecies in the Old Testament apply to the people and land of Israel specifically, not to the as-yet unknown and unrevealed Body of Christ.

Now just as Israel has its own history and promises, so also does the Body of Christ. **It is only in the New Testament, especially the Letters, where the “mystery” (secret) of this new Congregation is revealed** (Rom. 11:25, 16:25, 1 Cor. 2:7, Eph. 1:9, 3:3-9, Col. 1:26-27, 2:2, and 4:3). Not even the Gospels tell us much about prophecies concerning the Body of Christ, since Jesus stated clearly that his primary mission was to “the lost sheep of Israel” (Mat. 15:24). Neither will the events of Revelation be primarily about the Body of Christ, which is never addressed after the seven letters in chapters two and three. We are “not appointed to wrath” (1 Thes. 5:9) and have never shared in the guilt or prophecies of Israel. No other righteous people from any other age before or after the Age of Grace were or will be promised the Holy Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing salvation (2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5, Eph. 1:13-14). Unlike us, Israel was never described as the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27, Eph. 4:12). Regarding Eph. 3:6, which states that through the Gospel both Jew and Gentile are united into one Body, it also states that this unity is found “in Christ Jesus”. It doesn’t say that Gentiles are absorbed into Israel.

We are a unique entity, neither Jew nor Gentile, without any detailed commands for sacred buildings or rituals. We share with Israel neither law nor priesthood (Heb. 7), prophecy nor judgment, risk of being disowned nor exiled and scattered. **Since our salvation and righteousness are found not in ourselves but in Jesus, we can no more be taken from him nor choose to leave him than he could do such things to himself** (1 Cor. 6:19b-20a).

One other important principle to establish is that there was no death or mortality before sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). Therefore, death and mortality cannot continue after sin has been done away with, since they’re part of the

curse and that curse will end (Rev. 22:3). So whenever we encounter a passage of scripture that speaks of mortality, even if people live long and happy lives, we must conclude that the passage refers to a time before the curse is taken away. This is also true of the matter of final, personal judgment. If we read a passage about the judgment of the dead and the destruction of Death and Hades, then no one can be judged afterwards. Therefore, no one can die after that point, since they would never be judged and there's no place for them to go.

As another example, if we see a passage that speaks of the land of Israel, we must not apply it to the Body of Christ. Or if we read about endurance to be saved, we know it doesn't concern us, since we who are in Christ are credited with his righteousness, and it's a received gift rather than an earned wage (Rom. 6:14, 11:6, Eph. 2:8-9). As noted earlier, **we are not to suffer the wrath of God, for the same reason that we're only righteous because we belong to Jesus.** This hardly means we don't suffer in this age of grace (Act 5:41, Rom. 5:3, 8:17-18, Heb. 11), but that this is not the wrath of God which will be poured out on the whole world (Rev. 3:10).

## Summary

- The Bible is primarily about the people and land of Israel.
- Scriptures to and about Israel aren't to be applied to Christians or Gentiles.
- Scriptures to and about Christians aren't to be mixed with or applied to the people or land of Israel, or to the Gentiles.
- Unique properties of the Body of Christ include salvation as a gift, righteousness found only in Jesus and not ourselves, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and exemption from the wrath of God.
- Since death (mortality) only began as the curse earned by sin, then the end of the curse is the end of sin and mortality.
- No one can live a mortal life after all personal judgments are completed and there's no more place for the dead.

Now when we examine any prophetic passage, we need to ask questions like these:

- Does the context indicate that the passage can be taken literally, figuratively, symbolically?
- Has this event happened in history to complete fulfillment?
- Was the prophecy given before Israel existed? Before Pentecost? Before the Age of Grace was revealed?
- Are the “saints” having to endure and work for their salvation? Are they being overcome by “the gates of hell” (Mat. 16:18) or suffering the wrath of God?
- Are there any mortals still on the earth?
- Is there any personal judgment after this, or any place for the dead to go?

Note: The terms “saints” and “elect” refer to the righteous of any age; they aren’t unique to Christianity. Everyone in the Body of Christ is a saint, but not every saint is in the Body of Christ.

## The Rapture

What, and when, is this event called The Rapture? Before we answer those questions, let’s remember these principles:

1. Having a good understanding of all scripture is required in order to teach any part of it. That means no cherry-picking or ignoring context.
2. Every interpretation of the Bible hinges on whether there’s a sharp distinction between Israel and the Body of Christ. Disagreement on that point means disagreement on everything else.
3. Neither of those “main branches of the tree” should call each other names. If one side is calling the other names, that side has a much bigger problem than prophecy views. Argue the idea, not the person. Neither side has been designated the infallible interpreter of scripture, so we must be humble and remember that we’re all imperfect in our understanding, and that genuine believers can disagree without one of them being a heretic, a false teacher, or a devil.
4. The pre-tribulation Rapture is the most straightforward conclusion to reach from the basis of the Body of Christ not being Israel.

The Rapture is the traditional name for when all who belong to Jesus will be taken to heaven before God’s wrath is poured out on the world. The Biblical

term is *the Departure* (Gk. *ho apostasia*), in which believers are suddenly snatched up to meet Jesus in the air. The word *Rapture* comes from the Latin translation of the Greek word *harpadzo* (to be “caught up”), and we use it figuratively to describe being taken away by great emotion.

## The event

Here’s a brief description of the stages or elements of this event, which are taken from John 11:25-26, John 14:1-3, 1 Cor 15:50-53, 1 Thes. 4:15-18, 1 Thes. 5:1-11, 2 Thes. 2:1-12, and Rev 3:10:

1. Jesus descends from heaven to the sky (not to the earth)
2. The archangel shouts
3. The trumpet of God sounds
4. Those followers of Jesus who have died are raised in immortal bodies
5. Those followers of Jesus still living are instantly transformed from mortal to immortal
6. Both groups are snatched away up into the clouds to meet Jesus
7. Jesus takes us to his Father’s house

## The target

What is *not* included in the event is Jesus’ Olivet Discourse, so named for the prophetic teaching he gave on the Mount of Olives in Mat. 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. The *church* as we know it (better described as the Body of Christ, assembly, or congregation) did not exist until Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection, and the only possible references to it are in Mat. 16:18, John 11:25-26, and John 14:1-3.

We must understand that *church* (Gk. *ecclesia*) was a generic reference to any gathering or congregation, and in the context of Mat. 18:17 it refers to the people of Israel, for which the Hebrew equivalent *synagogue* was used throughout the Old Testament. The very same Greek word is used in Acts 19:32 for a mob of worshipers of Diana/Artemis. We must understand as well that the idea of some other congregation than Israel was foreign to the Old

Testament, since this new congregation was kept a secret until after Jesus arose, per 1 Cor. 2:7, Eph. 3:6,9, and Col. 1:26. He had specified that he came to Israel first (Mat. 15:24), the same people specified in all Old Testament prophecies, especially Dan. 9:24.

On the matter of “snatch events”, we should be aware that there were two Old Testament incidences: both Elijah and Enoch were taken by God without dying. In Acts 8:39, Philip was suddenly taken from one town to another. Another consideration is in Isaiah 26:19-21, where the people of Israel are told to hide behind closed doors until the wrath of God passed. All of this is to make the point that the idea of being taken away without dying, or being protected from the wrath of God, is not invented by Rapture believers.

## The setting

Unlike many Old Testament prophecies, or even the book of Revelation, the Rapture is not associated with any signs or prior events. The two primary passages, 1 Thes. 5:1-11 and 2 Thes. 2:1-12, tell us what happens afterwards, so the Rapture is actually the event that must precede the Day of the Lord. Now let's examine each of those passages in detail.

### 1 Thes. 5:1-11

Sisters and brothers, we really don't need to write to you about times and seasons, 2 because you already know that **the Day of the Master** comes like a thief in the night. 3 When **they** say “peace and safety” sudden ruin will come upon **them** like labor pains and **they** will not escape. 4 But **you**, on the other hand, are not in the dark, that **this Day** should surprise **you** like a thief. 5 **you** are all of the light and the daytime, not the darkness and the night. 6 So don't doze off like **the rest** but watch and be sensible. 7 For those who doze off sleep at night, and the drunks get drunk at night; 8 but **we** are of the day and must be sensible, putting on the torso armor of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation. 9 Because God did **not** appoint **us** to suffer **his wrath** but to acquire salvation by means of our Master Jesus the Anointed 10 who died for our sakes, so that whether we

are alert or dozing off we will live together with him. 11 So comfort each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

2 Thes. 2:1-12

Now, brothers and sisters, concerning the coming of our Master Jesus the Anointed and **our gathering together with him**: 2 Please don't be easily disturbed or alarmed in your minds or spirits, because no word or letter has come from us saying that the **Day of the Master** is already here. 3 Don't let anyone fool you by any means, because **that** won't happen until after **the Departure**, **and then** the Lawless One, the Destroyer, will be revealed. 4 He opposes everything and elevates himself over every god or object of worship, even to the point of seating himself in the Temple of God and proclaiming himself God. 5 You have forgotten that I told you these things when I was with you. 6 And you know **what is holding him back for now**, so that he is only revealed in his time. 7 For although the secret of lawlessness is already in operation, it is only **after the Restrainer is taken out of the way** 8 that the Lawless One will be revealed. This is the one the Master Jesus will do away with by the breath of his mouth, and will neutralize **when he appears at his arrival**. 9 He will come when the Adversary is at the height of his power, which he held by means of signs and fake miracles and seduction. 10 This injustice will all have been done **to those who are dying**, because **they** would not love the truth that would save **them**. 11 As a result, **God** will send **them** in the wrong direction so **they** will believe the lie, 12 and in this way **all who rejected the truth and celebrated injustice** will be condemned.

Further support for the Body of Christ not suffering the wrath of God is found in 1 Thes. 1:10, (5:9 above), and Rev. 3:10. We'll see in the next section some objections, including the definition of the wrath of God. But to this point, at the very least the case presented for the event itself is well-supported in scripture, such that the only real dispute is over its timing.

## Alternatives and objections

There are several different views on the timing of the Rapture, but they all hinge upon the definition of the wrath of God. Consider these points derived from scripture:

- not all wrath or tribulation is from God
- not all references to the wrath of God refer to the end times (Rom. 1:18, 1 Thes. 2:16)
- but some do (Rom. 2:5, Col. 3:6)
- the wrath of God, and the Lamb who is also God: Rev. 6:16, 14:10,19, 15:7, 16:1,19, 19:15

Now we can examine each passage where wrath or tribulation is mentioned and see if the context indicates the end-times or the Day of the Lord. Then we can see if any of those passages describe events matching the Rapture. Such examination indicates first of all that the end-times wrath of God / Day of the Lord is not associated with the Rapture. Then we would see that scripture states it begins with the 1st Seal (Rev. 6:1-2) since the Lamb causes the events and the Lamb is God; the latest would be the 6th Seal (Rev. 6:12-17) when “the day of their great wrath has come”. There is simply no support for interpretations of God’s wrath starting any later than that.

Most objections to the Rapture and its coming prior to the 1st Seal are not based on scripture but from attempts to poison the well, such as by claiming it came from some false teacher or unbeliever in times past. Yet an honest student of history would see that just about any teaching can be smeared with some nefarious character at some point, and no appeal to any source outside of scripture has been made in this, or any other, document about the pre-tribulational Rapture.

## Claims and Rebuttals

### **People who believe in the pre-trib Rapture (abbreviated PTR here for convenience) are conceited and “holier than thou”**

The opposite is true. PTR believers simply see the promise in scripture that Jesus will remove his Body before the wrath of God is poured out on the world. It doesn't depend on the quality or maturity of Christians, but simply their being in Christ. **No PTR believer bases their “blessed hope” on their own righteousness, any more than all the Christians who reject PTR base their salvation on their own righteousness.** In fact, if anyone is “holier than thou”, it would be those who pride themselves on their alleged ability to “overcome” during the wrath of God.

### **The PTR teaches that Christians will not suffer, so it sets them up for falling away from the faith.**

This is burning a straw man; PTR teaches no such thing. Jesus promised persecution to his followers (Mark 10:30), and Paul in 2 Tim. 3:12 said, **“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”**. Even today, many Christians are suffering terribly and dying for the Name of Jesus. So anyone who teaches that Christians will not suffer is clearly in error, regardless of their views on prophecy. The fact is that PTR only concerns the wrath of God and the time Daniel was told was for punishing the unbelieving world and bringing Israel back to God. **Since the first 69 weeks of years of the prophecy of Daniel had nothing to do with the Body of Christ, then neither will the 70th.** And since all other generations of believers escaped the Tribulation, why would only one generation require this extra refining?

Those who oppose PTR may in fact be unprepared for the sudden appearing of Jesus; they look for the Antichrist instead of the Christ. They will also not receive “the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will

award to me on that day— and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). If PTR is wrong, it will be time for those who boasted of their preparation and discernment to prove themselves. In contrast, PTR believers would never be fooled, since the Antichrist will not do any of the following:

- sound the trumpet of God
- give the shout of the archangel
- raise from the dead all Christians who have died
- give the dead new, immortal bodies
- instantly transform the bodies of the living Christians to immortal
- take all of us (**not** invite us to board a spaceship) to meet him in the air

We also know that we are already sealed with the Holy Spirit, so we will not accept any other seals. The Mark of the Beast is a pledge of loyalty and has to be taken knowingly and voluntarily, and Jesus would never say “take this mark or starve to death”.

## **The PTR is a recent invention.**

The most common citation of this being a new teaching is a teenager named [Margaret MacDonald](#), who claimed to have had a prophetic vision in 1824. **But she did not have a vision of any Rapture at all, but that the saints would suffer through the final judgments.** Further, no PTR teacher ever cites her or her alleged vision for any reason. Critics who would then allege a conspiracy to hide such a source would be arguing from silence, not to mention opening themselves up to similar charges. There are also [earlier references](#) to PTR.

Another historical fact is that between Constantine the 1st and the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church had control of what the vast majority of people believed. So whatever they were against would not be written about extensively, especially by people who faced persecution for going against the RCC. So there were many things not written about during those centuries. And since the RCC did not teach any Rapture view, it should come as no sur-

prise that the Rapture, regardless of timing, would not be found in the history of that era.

## **The PTR was a heresy started by Darby and made popular by Scofield.**

[Darby](#) stated that he saw the PTR in scripture, three years before MacDonald's (non-rapture) vision. [Scofield](#) was noted for his teaching of [Dispensationalism](#), as well as his Reference Bible. The PTR is a logical conclusion to draw from a dispensational approach to scripture, but this approach is hardly heresy. The allegorical approach is at least as open to the same charge, as is so-called Covenant Theology wherein no distinction is made between the Body of Christ and Israel.

## **The PTR is escapist and cowardly.**

In Luke 21:36 Jesus said to “pray that you may be able **to escape** all that is about to happen”; in Rev. 3:10 Jesus said, “**I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth**”. Is Jesus teaching that escape is cowardly? How about Isaiah 26:20? “Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; **hide yourselves** for a little while until his wrath has passed by.”

## **The PTR creates an extra coming of Christ.**

By that argument, Jesus should not come back at all, since the Old Testament does not say the Messiah would come twice. And where does scripture even say how many times Jesus can or must come? Who decided that there is a Second Coming and not a third? We only know of the two comings in the Old Testament by hindsight, noting that there are two sets of Messianic prophecies that could not both be true for a single coming. This sets a precedent for the future as well. We see in the NT two sets of prophecies regarding Jesus' return, and note that they both cannot be true for a single coming or appearing. So just as the **Old Testament said nothing about how many times the Mes-**

**siah would come** yet we know it's at least two, so also the **New Testament says nothing about how many times Jesus will return** yet we know it must be at least twice. And Jesus does not touch the earth when he comes for his Body; we meet him in the air.

### **The first resurrection isn't until Rev. 20:5-6, after the Tribulation.**

That passage identifies the people being resurrected as those who had been beheaded for not worshiping the Beast or taking the Mark. **So no Christian who died by some other method than beheading** will take part in this first resurrection. And what about all the Christians who die during the first half of the Tribulation, before the Mark is given? Also, these people only reign with Christ for the Millennium. Further, the passage contrasts this resurrection of the Tribulation saints with the resurrection of all the rest of the dead from all ages of history, at the White Throne Judgment in Rev. 20:11-15. Though it isn't named as such, this is the second resurrection.

Neither of these two resurrections apply to the Body of Christ. As stated clearly in 1 Thes. 4:17, not all Christians will experience death, so not all Christians will ever be resurrected; a person must die in order to rise. If it is then argued that our resurrection is in Christ, then how many resurrections are there for those Christians who died during the Tribulation and are raised again at the end of it? How many times can the dead rise without dying again? We must conclude that the first resurrection in this context refers only to people who came to faith during the second half of the Tribulation and were martyred by beheading.

Another passage often overlooked on this matter is the scenario provided by Jesus in Mat. 25:31. This is the well-known judgment of the "sheep and goats" which clearly happens when he returns to earth after the Tribulation and sits on his throne to judge the survivors. We have already noted that this is not the final judgment of all the dead. Another reason it is not the judgment of the Body of Christ is that **salvation is by faith alone** (Eph. 2:8-9), and the post-tribulation view agrees that the Body of Christ has been given immortali-

ty by this time. So we must conclude that this is a judgment of the still-mortal survivors of the Tribulation.

There are two groups of people before the separation of sheep from goat even begins: the ones to be judged, and “the least of my brothers and sisters”, But who are “the least”? It’s possible that they could be the Body of Christ, but it’s also possible that these are the Jews who fled to the place of safety when they witnessed the Abomination of Desolation (Rev. 12:6, 14). They are not being judged since God kept them safe for the entire duration of the Great Tribulation, “out of the serpent’s reach”. Their safety is proof of their being righteous.

Regardless of the identity of “the least”, the indisputable fact is that there will be righteous mortals repopulating the world after the Body of Christ has been immortalized and raptured. And since this is true, then there is no necessary reason for the saints of the Tribulation to be part of the Body of Christ.

## **The PTR ignores what Jesus taught in Mat. 24.**

Anti-PTR ignores practically every other passage about end-times prophecy, putting Mat. 24 in a vacuum. Many are also confused by the signs and disasters in Revelation, thinking that all instances of earthquakes for example are one and the same event. But consider this: Jesus told of extreme cosmic events **after** the Great Tribulation which will make it clear that it is indeed the end (Mat. 24:29-31, ref. Isaiah 13:10; 34:4):

- sun and moon go dark
- stars fall from sky
- powers of heavens (skies and/or space) shaken
- extreme turbulence on earth, with oceans roaring and splashing
- the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man in the sky
- he descends in the clouds in great power and majesty
- trumpet blast to send out Messengers to collect “the chosen” from all over “the heavens”

On the surface, the first four signs appear to match up with the 6th Seal of Revelation (Rev. 6:12-14), which is clearly **not the end** of the Great Tribulation:

- the moon is red instead of black
- the stars fall to earth
- the sky itself “rolls up like a scroll”
- every mountain is shifted from its place.

There is at least one Old Testament reference to such things as well (Joel 2:31), and it too places them “**before** that great and terrible day of the Lord”:

I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood **before** the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

So we see that very similar signs both precede and follow the 70th week of the prophecy of Daniel.

### **The PTR is the “strong delusion” prophesied by Paul.**

The delusion Paul mentions is sent **from God** to “them” (2 Thess. 2:10-13), not from Satan to Christians. So there is no basis in scripture for this ridiculous charge, and it can be made just as easily against opposition to PTR. Since PTR comes mostly from Paul in the first place, one would be hard-pressed to show how he would call his own teaching delusional.

### **Paul taught that the Rapture isn’t until after The Man of Sin is revealed.**

The passage being referenced is 2 Thes. 2:1-12, specifically vs 3:

Don’t let anyone trick you in any way, for that day will not come until the Departure happens and then the Lawless One, the destroyer, is revealed.

But “that day” refers to “**the day of the Lord**” in the previous verse, which is **not** the Departure or Rapture. Moreover, the people Paul was writing to were **afraid** that they had missed the Departure and would now go through the Tribulation. Who fears an allegory, or is afraid they missed the Tribulation? Conversely, who should be comforted (1 Thes. 4:13-18) by a teaching that has them going through the Tribulation?

We tell you this by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive when the Lord appears will not be in line in front of those who have died. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with the loud command of the archangel and the trumpet of God; the first to rise will be those Christians who have died, and then we who are alive will be snatched away at the same time with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will always be together with the Lord. **So comfort each other with these words.**

Here is an example of how the PTR interprets 2 Thes. 2:1-8a:

Now about that question you asked regarding us meeting Jesus in the air. Don't let anyone fool you! We said nothing like what that fake letter claimed, that the Tribulation has already started. The Tribulation cannot begin until after the Rapture, and then the Lawless One will be revealed. How could you forget what I told you? And you know what's holding him back for now. Although lawlessness is already here, it's only after the Body of Christ is taken out of the way that the Lawless One will be revealed.

### **The PTR invents a “last trumpet” before the last one mentioned in Revelation.**

The 7th trump is **not** the last trump. The 7th is **of an angel** and a **judgment** (Rev. 11:15), while the last is **of God** and is a **blessing** (1 Thess. 4:16). There was a “last” trumpet for Israel before the time of Christ (Numbers 10:5-6), which Paul's readers would have understood as a call to leave or break camp, as opposed to those of Revelation which had not yet been given.

## **The wrath of God does not begin until the Bowl judgments.**

It is undeniable that Jesus, the Lamb, is also God. So any wrath coming from Jesus is, by definition, the wrath of God. This is acknowledged no later than Rev. 6:16, but note that it is the people of earth making this statement, not God or John or any heavenly angel. Also note that all of the Seals are opened by the Lamb, even though the results on earth are “natural” for the first four. That is, the Lamb instigates the Seal judgments, so they are all the wrath of God.

## **The Rapture is at the 6th Seal judgment.**

This claim is based upon presuming the identity of the “multitude in white robes from every nation” in Rev. 7:9-17. But the Greek grammar clearly indicates their origin and scope: they **come** out of **the** Great Tribulation. There is no indication that this was a past, singular event, and their origin is not just “tribulation” but “**The** Great Tribulation”. This same expression is used by Jesus to describe “a time of trouble never seen before and never to be seen again” (Mat. 24:21), and this is immediately after Jesus quotes Daniel’s statement about “the abomination of desolation”. So the multitude comes from the time of the Bowl judgments, even though John sees them at the sixth seal.

## **There is nothing connecting Daniel to Revelation.**

As already explained, Daniel 9:27 says that the Beast will break a seven-year treaty at the midpoint. We find that same event in Rev. 13:1-8, indicating the midpoint there:

Then I saw a beast rise out of the sea, and it had ten horns and seven heads... The whole earth was astounded at the beast, and **they worshiped the dragon** for giving jurisdiction to it. They said, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight it?” The beast was given a mouth with which to speak great and slanderous things, and its **jurisdiction would be for forty-two months**. It opened up its mouth to slander God and his name, and his sanctuary and all who live in

heaven. And it was allowed to do battle with the holy people and conquer them, as well as to have jurisdiction over all tribes, people groups, languages, and non-Judeans. **All the earth-dwellers will worship it**, whose names have not been written in the scroll of life of the Lamb who had been slaughtered from the establishment of the world.

So both passages describe a world leader who confirms a seven-year treaty and then breaks it by declaring himself God and setting up an abomination in the temple. It's reasonable to conclude that both Daniel and Revelation, which no one denies extend to the end of human history, describe the same period, which Daniel specifies is seven years.

### **The PTR contradicts where Rev. says the saints will be overcome by the Beast.**

That passage was quoted above, but the “holy people” are not the Body of Christ. The terms holy people, saints, and elect were used of the righteous in the Old Testament as well, so they're not exclusive terms for the Body of Christ. That is, though every Christian is a saint, not every saint is a Christian. And since saints preceded the Age of Grace, they will also follow it. This must be considered in context, and when the context is the point being debated, then the identity of these people depends completely on one's view of dispensations. But if dispensationalism is the right view, then these are not Christians in the Age of Grace. We must also consider what Jesus said in Mat. 16:18, that “the gates of Hades” will not overcome his Congregation.

### **Mapping Daniel to Revelation**

A study of the Seventy Weeks prophecy of Daniel ch. 9 shows that a final seven years remains. It will begin with the confirmation of a seven-year treaty, and now we will see where this treaty and its violation matches up with Revelation. Referencing Rev. 13:1-8 which shows where the midpoint of the 70th Week is, **the 7th trumpet must mark the midpoint**. Therefore, all the trumpets are in the first 3.5 years. It is unknown whether the Seals are before or after the beginning of that time, as they may comprise a gap between the Rap-

ture and the confirmation of the covenant for 7 years. The Rapture precedes the Seals because we must be gone before the wrath of God begins.

## Conclusion

The Rapture or Departure of the “church” is clearly taught in scripture. Though some may dismiss the idea that we should wish to escape times of trouble, no less than Jesus Himself taught it, not only in Rev.3:10 and Isaiah 26:19-21, but also in Luke 21:36. Jesus cannot suffer the wrath of God anymore, and we who make up his Body cannot suffer it either. Yet the Day of his great wrath is yet to come, so it cannot come while we who belong to him are still here. The rising of those who died belonging to Jesus, and the transformation of his living followers to immortal, cannot be faked. We who are also sealed with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22, Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30) cannot take any other seal and thus be doomed. This is, as scripture states, our “blessed hope”.

The continual slander against the PTR view is based upon failure to understand it or blind acceptance of lies from its enemies. We do not smugly watch the world decay, nor ignore the terrible persecution of Christians now or in history, nor wish for the suffering of the lost. Neither are we unprepared for suffering, as this was promised by Jesus to all his followers. The truth is that we are highly motivated to spread the Gospel so others too can “escape all these things” as Jesus said. What things? Not the typical wrath of Satan and man, but **the wrath of God** to come.

Who will really be unprepared? Is it not the ones who disbelieve in the pre-trib Rapture? The Beast cannot duplicate all the requirements of Jesus coming for his Body, and instead of coming in the air the Beast will arise out of the earth.

As for the Mark, Christians are **already sealed** and would never be fooled into taking another one. But opponents of PTR will be caught off-guard by the Rapture, and may well be among those caught “beating their fellow servants” when Jesus arrives; just look at social media comments for examples of such beatings. Even mid-trib Rapture believers heap abuse upon PTR over a difference in timing of 3-1/2 years, and will call us stupid, wicked, deceived, evil,

false Christians. Many believe that Christians today will be called to suffer in a way no other believers of any generation have suffered. Instead,

[We] wait for his Son from the heavens, whom he raised from the dead: Jesus, the One who **rescues us from the coming wrath**. ~ 1 Thes. 1:10

Don't let disturbing thoughts fill your minds; trust in God, and trust in me. There are many **residences in my Father's home**. If there weren't, would I have told you I'm going there to get a place ready for all of you? That being the case, **I will return to you** and accept you as my own, so that **you can be where I am**. ~ John 14:1-4

## The Millennium and Beyond

First, a brief outline:

### The Millennium

- Israel re-established in land, restored earthly Jerusalem and temple (Ezk. 36-37, 40-48, Jer. 30:10, 16-24, Amos 9:11-15)
- Rule by Christ and the souls of those who refused to worship the Beast or take its mark (Rev. 20:4)

### After the Millennium

- Satan released (Rev. 20:7)
- Final battle of Gog/Magog but from all nations around the world (Rev. 20:8-9a)
- Satan's world-wide army destroyed by fire (Zech. 14:12-13, Rev. 20:9b)
- Satan in Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10)
- New heavens and new earth without any sea (Rev. 21:1)
- New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2,9-22:5)

Revelation says nothing about the Millennium except that Jesus' rule is augmented by judges comprised of those who had been beheaded during the Tribulation. This is called "the first resurrection", yet it is clearly not applicable to the resurrection of the dead in Christ, since all of these people are those who had been beheaded for refusing to take the Mark of the Beast.

Some of the remaining Old Testament prophecies transpire during this time, such as the surviving Gentiles bringing their wealth into Jerusalem (Zech. 14), and the restoration of the land of Israel and a sacrificial system (Ezekiel 40-48). The measurements of the earthly city of Jerusalem distinguish it from the heavenly New Jerusalem that will descend at the end of the Millennium; careful attention to the details will show this to be indisputable. It may be that just as the first temple was a scale model of the one in heaven (Heb. 8:5), so also the earthly city will be a scale model of the New Jerusalem.

After the Millennium, Satan is briefly freed again to deceive the nations. This brings history full-circle from the Garden of Eden, where God proves in both cases that people will rebel against God even in a perfect environment. The world has been repopulated by righteous survivors of the judgments, but the children of these survivors will have no memory of the world run by Satan and evil people. They too will have to make a conscious choice about whether or not to live in the kingdom of God, and Satan will conscript all who choose the latter.

So at the end, Satan himself is thrown into the Lake of Fire, and all the people who ever rebelled against God are thrown in as well. Death and Hades are thrown in too, since there is no more need for them. Then, in Rev. 21, we are told many details about the New Jerusalem. It isn't stated that this huge city ever touches the earth, but only that it descends from heaven. It is called "the wife, the bride of the Lamb", and nothing is ever said about the people of the newly-rebuilt city of Jerusalem in the land of Israel moving to the New Jerusalem. It is possible that the land city is for Jews, while the new city is for Christians.

What happens after that, we are not told. But there is nothing that says we'll be stuck playing harps forever, or grow wings, or any of a hundred other tales

that have been told over the years. If we love and trust God, we can be sure that there was more to all this human history than sitting on clouds for eternity. All we know is that “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

# Pseudo- or Non-Biblical

## Annihilationism

Annihilationism teaches that the souls/spirits of those who reject God are to be annihilated, completely destroyed, never suffering eternal torment. But is that what the Bible teaches?

### Key Words

The teaching of Annihilationism centers around two key Greek words, one of which is usually translated *eternal*, and the other *destruction*. We need to take a close look at those words before we can build a teaching on them.

There was no Greek word for *eternity* or *everlasting*. Instead it was expressed as *ages* with the Greek word *aionois*; see [Biblehub](#). Some count 60 or 70 occurrences of the word in the New Testament. Quoting [Tektonics](#),

51 of these refer to the unending happiness of the righteous; 2 refer to the duration of God in His glory; 6 indicate an endless amount of time in other contexts; and 7 appear in reference to the punishment of the wicked.

The Greek word for *destruction* is *apollumi*; see [Biblehub](#). There are around 90 occurrences of the word, and the overall usage indicates the idea of *that which cannot return to its former place or condition*. It is an exclusion rather than disintegration or being wiped out of existence. In contrast, the word *luo* (2 Peter 3:11) means *loosened, disintegrated, dissolved*, and *diaphtheiro* (Rev. 8:9) means *rotted, decayed*. In both those cases, it's *things* being destroyed, rather than people or souls.

## Scriptural References to the Afterlife

The Old Testament says relatively little about the afterlife and does not present a thorough, developed doctrine about it. So we will focus on the New Testament's statements in various contexts. Here is a list of the most pertinent references to the fate of the unrighteous dead, and to take them all as metaphors is to beg the question.

- **Mat. 22:13** weeping/teeth gnashing, cast out of kingdom
- **Mat. 24:51** assigned a place with the hypocrites
- **Mat. 25:46** the same *aionois* duration for both life and punishment
- **Luke 13:27** outer darkness
- **Acts 24:15** both righteous and wicked will be raised
- **2 Thes. 1:9** *aionois olethros* (age-long ruin) away from presence of Lord
- **Jude 13** blackest darkness rather than nothingness
- **Rev. 14:11** no rest day or night for those who worship beast and take its mark
- **Rev. 20:10** devil/angels in lake of fire and tormented *aionois*
- **Rev. 22:15** outside are despised, miserable people

In addition to those, compare Mt. 10:28/Luke 12:4-5 [fear him who can *apolumi* soul and body], with Luke 15:4 [has 100 sheep and one is *apollumi*. Both use the same Greek word; did one sheep get utterly destroyed? Of course not; the lost sheep continued to exist even while in a state of being lost. See also Mat. 15:24, where Jesus came to the *apollumi* sheep of Israel, or Luke 19:10 where Jesus came to seek and save the *apollumi*, or Luke 15:32 where the prodigal son was *apollumi* and then was found.

Now if a person thrown into fire dies, then isn't their soul also immediately destroyed? If not, why not? Why make them conscious of suffering even for a limited time? And what kind of God would wake the dead just to judge their works (Rev. 20:11-15) and then annihilate them? How does that show God's holiness and justice, rather than sadistic pleasure in torturing people before he destroys them? How is Annihilationism an improvement over eternal conscious torment, on the basis of compatibility with a loving God?

Consider also what the purpose of an allegory is. For example, Rev. 5:8 shows that literal incense symbolizes literal prayer. Then why can we not also say that literal fire/smoke symbolizes literal suffering? Does scripture ever say that eternal torment is exactly like fire in every respect? That is a gross misunderstanding of allegory in general.

## Implications to the Gospel Message

How does Annihilationism affect the Gospel? Here is a hypothetical conversation to illustrate the problem arising from this teaching. Alex is an atheist, and Chris is a Christian.

Chris: You need to trust Jesus to save you.

Alex: Why? Save me from what?

Chris: Eternal separation from God.

Alex: Why is that bad?

Chris: Don't you want to spend eternity in happiness?

Alex: Not sure, what are all the choices?

Chris: Well, the only other choice is to be completely destroyed.

Alex: Wait, are you saying there's no eternal torment?

Chris: Exactly, that's a false teaching to scare people.

Alex: So if I'll be destroyed, so what? I already believe that.

Chris: But don't you want to be happy forever?

Alex: If I'm destroyed, I won't know I'm not happy.

Chris: Wouldn't you rather keep living and be happy?

Alex: Not if it means I can't live how I want here and now. Don't Christians suffer persecution for their faith?

Chris: Yes, sometimes, but it's totally worth it to get eternal happiness.

Alex: So I should suffer persecution and give up control of my life to someone I can't even prove exists, instead of living how I want and even getting away with murder, since I'll just go to sleep and never wake up?

Chris: Okay, let me explain it this way: You're a kid and your parents offer to take you to a theme park. You've never been there so you say 'no'. They say you

don't know what you'd be missing, it'll be fun. You say no, I'd rather play with my friends and do whatever I want all day. See, you'd never know the fun you could have had, because you wanted to stick to what you're used to.

Alex: You left out the part where if I go to the theme park, I'll spend most of the day in the hot sun, dying of thirst, waiting in long lines, hardly eating anything because the food is overpriced.

Chris: But... the rides, the prizes, the souvenirs! And don't you want to please your parents, who love you enough to make the offer?

Alex: Not if it means being miserable most of the time.

Chris: But when you get to heaven you'll be with people you love. We can't even imagine how awesome it will be!

Alex: But you're telling me I won't even know what I'm missing. Seems to me that the only people who will suffer are the ones in heaven who remember me.

What would you choose?

1. Suffer now, be happy for eternity.
2. Be happy now, knowing you won't be aware of any eternal consequences since you just go to sleep and never wake up. As a saying from the 1970s goes, "Do unto others— then split!" Those who get away with injustice in this life will never be held to account.

## Conclusion

The reason separation from God is bad, is because all that is good comes from God. God doesn't **send** people to eternal torment, they **demand** it, because they want nothing that comes from God. God isn't just love, he is also holy and just. There will be a judgment day for a reason.

Above all, we as Christians must remember that eternal conscious torment is **our** motivation to spread the Gospel, never **other people's** motivation to accept it. Salvation is reconciliation and adoption through faith in the risen Jesus (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 2 Cor. 5:18-21), which can never be forced or coerced, and especially not by means of fear tactics or deal-making.

## Further reading

Please note that this is not an endorsement of all material at these external websites.

- [Eternal torment or annihilation?](#)
- [Annihilationism: An Unbiblical Doctrine](#)

## Calvinism

Calvinism is the belief that God chooses which people to save, rather than offering everyone the free will to decide whether or not to accept him. It is best known by the acronym TULIP:

1. **T**otal Depravity (a.k.a. Original Sin)
2. **U**nconditional Election
3. **L**imited Atonement
4. **I**rresistible Grace
5. **P**erseverance of the Saints

The U, L, and I depend upon T being true. Since people are born depraved, then God must choose or elect certain ones for salvation without regard for any merit in them. Jesus only died for those elect, and they cannot resist the will of God to choose them. We can know who was chosen only when they persevere in faith to the end of their lives. This belief system originated with the Roman Catholic Bishop Augustine. Here is a summary from [one source](#):

Calvin is continually praising Augustine's work with numerous references and quotations. Augustine was greatly influenced by the Gnostics, an early Christian sect, whose doctrine was heretical. Gnostics believed that mankind was wholly evil and some sects even renounced marriage and procreation. They also believed in two gods,

one evil and one good. Their teachings are believed to have influenced Saint Augustine in the development of his theology of the “total depravity” of mankind and his concept of God. For nine years Saint Augustine adhered to Manichaeism, a Persian dualistic philosophy proclaimed by Mani (216-276? AD) in southern Babylonia (Iraq) that taught a doctrine of “total depravity” and the claim that they were the “elect”. Augustine then turned to skepticism and was attracted to the philosophy of Neoplatonism. He blended these beliefs with his later Gnostic and Christian teachings. Augustine’s prolific writings were more strongly biased by his previously obtained theology than on his detailed study of the Christian Scriptures. He used Christian Scripture out of context when words or phrases could be adapted to match his theology. Augustine’s teachings were in turn passed on to John Calvin through his extensive study of Augustine’s writings. It is very easy to follow the trail of John Calvin’s theology from the pagan religion of Mani in Babylonia to Saint Augustine and into his own writings in France and Geneva that distort the Word of God. Calvin’s false doctrine came directly from Augustine.

Since the whole system depends upon Total Depravity (Original Sin), it is covered separately under that title. We will examine the other points here.

## Unconditional Election

Various proof-texts are offered to support the claim that God must select people for salvation. The more common ones are listed below with rebuttals:

- The Greek of Acts 16:14 says that Lydia’s mind (the heart was believed to be where thoughts occurred) was opened to pay attention to what Paul was saying; it does **not** say God forced Lydia to believe what he said. Is it “quicken- ing” or faith that comes from hearing the word (Romans 10:17)? God can limit or increase a person’s perception (see also Luke 24:31-32), but this does not violate free will because a person is still responsible for what they understand. The choices may be few or many, broad or restricted, but we are responsible for whatever those choices are.
- Acts 11:18 also does not say God forced the Gentiles to believe; it says he granted them the same opportunity as the Jews. The whole sequence from Pe-

ter's vision to this statement teaches the fact that, as Paul would later say in Gal. 3:28, "in Christ there is no Jew or Gentile".

- 2 Peter 1:10 tells believers to confirm that they were called and chosen; they are elect because they are saved, not saved because they are elect.
- 1 Cor. 2:11-14 is not speaking about the ability to accept the Gospel message but about spiritual truths in general.
- John 1:13 is illustrating the difference between physical procreation and spiritual birth, not that people are incapable of making spiritual decisions. Verse 12 says "to all who received him he gave the right to become children of God", which is shown in opposition to those of physical birth. So this right to be spiritually born (regenerated) follows reception, yet Calvinism claims it precedes it.
- John 5:21 says "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it." But Jesus offers it to everyone, as shown in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." To read anything else into that verse— that any and all refer only to those chosen by God to be saved— begs the question.
- John 6:39 refers to the security of the believer, which has no bearing on the issue of predestination. Verse 44 is presumed to mean that the Father doesn't draw everyone, even though Jesus said that he would draw "all" to himself (John 12:32). Verses 63-65 show his foreknowledge. The "enabled" of verse 65 are the "receptive" of verse 12. 1 Peter 1:3 is not a proof of predestination, since no one argues that spiritual life is anything but a gift.
- In John 10:29-30 Jesus says not only that "the Father has given them to me", but also "I and the Father are one".
- The order of salvation is faith and then life, not the opposite as Calvinism claims. Romans 10:9 says, "if you confess and believe you will be saved". Hebrews 11:6 says that "without faith it is impossible to please God", yet Calvinism proposes a regeneration without faith. In John 3:15 Jesus says that whoever believes has eternal life. Therefore, whoever does not believe does not have life. In other words, to not believe is to be figuratively dead, so life (the new birth) cannot precede belief.
- It is claimed that Eph. 2:1-2 says people are dead in sin, and the dead can do nothing on their own; they have to first be regenerated. But aside from the fact that the Greek text really says "You are all dead **to** the sins in which you once

lived”, this interpretation cannot be done consistently. Rom. 6:11 says that we who are saved are dead to sin; does that mean we’re incapable of sinning? And since we all clearly sin, we’re not as literally dead as Calvinism claims. It’s ridiculous to argue that we’re too dead to accept the Gospel, but not dead enough to be incapable of sinning. Could Lazarus sin while in the grave?

## Limited Atonement

According to Calvinism, Jesus only died for the elect, not the whole world; John 3:16 means all people without distinction, not all people without exception. But 1 John 2:2 states that Jesus was “the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”. Likewise, there is nothing in John 3:16 to put restrictions or qualifications on “whoever”. In fact, 1 Tim. 2:4 states that God “is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”. How many times must “whoever”, “any”, and “all” be redefined in order to argue that it doesn’t mean what it says in those passages? Look also at Rom. 5:12-15, and try to define “all” and “many” consistently. If righteousness only came to certain people, then sin and death only came to certain people; Calvinism cannot have it both ways.

Consider also the implication of saying that Jesus did not die for the whole world; it cheapens his blood and sacrifice because the quantity was irrelevant. One drop of blood, one minute of suffering, would have sufficed, because the Sacrifice was perfect and sinless. It’s impossible that any of this could be “wasted”, as Calvinism alleges would be true if Jesus died for the whole world but the whole world did not get saved.

Speaking of limitations, Calvinism argues that if God wants everyone to be saved, but everyone is not saved, then his sovereignty is violated and his will defied. This is a gross distortion of sovereignty; God does not have a delicate or fragile ego that cannot stand the slightest disagreement. Rather, God has the sovereignty to allow us free will. What God wants is for us to return his love, and love isn’t genuine if it isn’t free. The love of a will only changed by force would be a sham.

## Irresistible Grace

This claim means that if God wants to save you, you have nothing to say about it; his saving grace is an irresistible force. There isn't much to add here except that it's completely inferred from the T, U, and L, not from scripture. Grace is favor from the greater to the lesser, and like any gift it cannot be forced upon the recipient. Calvinism sees the act of faith to accept it as a "work", but Rom. 4:4-5 states that "Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does **not** work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness." A person stuck in a well does not save themselves if they take hold of a rope lowered to them by someone above. It's their choice whether to accept the offer, but no one credits them with saving themselves. Instead, the rescued person is grateful.

## Perseverance of the Saints

While this point doesn't necessarily depend on the others and isn't unique to Calvinism, it still isn't a scriptural teaching. Assurance of salvation is clearly taught in passages such as 2 Cor. 5:5, Eph. 1:13-15, and 1 John 5:13. The objection then is that this leads to "a license to sin", but Rom. 6:1-4 explains that we have "died to sin and cannot live in it any longer". How can we accept salvation by grace without humility and gratitude? How can we then live in defiance of what God has told us pleases him? How can we not understand that we've been adopted by God and are no longer "our own" (1 Cor. 7:23), meaning we cannot choose to take ourselves away from God? And lest the Calvinist claim that we have abandoned free will here, let them remember that our freedom is to make this choice of adoption. Just as toothpaste squeezed out of the tube can't be put back inside it, our acceptance of the gift of eternal life cannot be undone. At the end of [this study](#) is a long list of all the changes that happen to us the moment we're saved, and all of those things would have to be undone in order for salvation to be lost.

## Conclusion

Everything Calvinism believes hinges upon us all being born spiritually dead, and upon a distorted definition of the sovereignty of God. Because of that foundation, a very complex theological system is required in order to explain away clear passages about the love of God, the free will of people, and the fact that salvation is a gift received by the free exercise of faith. Most of its proof-texts depend upon extensive and inconsistent definitions and reading into the text whatever its theology requires; that is, it is circular and fallacious. Taken to its logical conclusion, Calvinism maligns the character of God to the point where he more resembles the raw sovereignty of Satan— a fact which is not lost on critics of the faith.

But what's the point of arguing about the lack of free will? Isn't that self-defeating for Calvinism, since the will of God cannot be resisted or changed? What difference does it make whether anyone believes in Calvinism, if God will do as he has predetermined regardless? The fact that Calvinists argue, and with such ferocity, is proof that they really do believe in free will. Otherwise they would have to admit that God is forcing them— and their opponents— to act out what is essentially a puppet show. Calvinism obfuscates the simple gospel of salvation by faith and needlessly divides believers.

Responsibility and free will cannot be separated. If one is held responsible for sin, one must have had the capacity not to sin. And since Calvinism holds people responsible for sin, then it must also grant them the ability not to sin. It is fallacious to argue that God gave us a "sin nature" yet isn't responsible for what we do with it, which we cannot help but do. If we had no free will, then God could not hold us responsible for what we do or shift the blame for what he himself created us to do. So to say we have no free will is to blame God for sin and evil. Only if we're free to choose between good and evil can we be capable of loving God or responsible for sinning against him.

Finally, consider Luke 5:32 which says, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why would Jesus refer to the elect as sinners, but the non-elect as righteous? Or is Jesus mocking the reprobate (the unchosen)

by calling them to do that which God made impossible? See also [11 Questions on Calvinism](#), and [this debate](#).

## Calvinism to Universalism

There are many similarities between Calvinism and Universalism. There is also a trajectory from Calvinism to Universalism due to the central belief they have in common: Unconditional Election (God decides whom to save, whether some or all). Let's begin with the similarities:

- Either God's holiness makes no allowance for his love, or his love makes no allowance for his holiness.
- God forces either some or all people to love him eventually.
- Evangelism really doesn't matter, since either all the elect or all people are guaranteed to be saved.
- Prayer really doesn't matter, since God will always do what he has decreed, which is either arbitrary election or universal election.
- There is no free will to reject God, since God will do whatever is necessary to turn either some or all people toward him.

Many more comparisons could be made, but the point is that in both systems God forces people to accept him, regardless of the means or time it may take. The end result is inevitable, whether it applies to some or to all. In addition, both systems have internal inconsistencies and disturbing conclusions:

- Calvinism: If most will spend eternity in hell because God is sovereign, then God is a cold-blooded monster. If God gives most people false hope by commanding the gospel to be spread to those he had reprobated, then God is a deceiver. If God fills the scriptures with commands for us to choose while knowing all the while that we have no such ability, then God is psychotic and wicked.
- Universalism: If no one will spend eternity in hell because God is love, then any and all suffering of any duration should never happen. Either suffering is compatible with God's love or it isn't, regardless of whether that suffering is temporary or eternal. Would a loving God allow babies to die of disease,

hunger, or violence? Also for annihilationism: How is either love or justice served by ending people's existence, since a loving God would have chosen not to make anyone who would reject him— meaning God is the worst kind of “fair weather friend”?

Unbelievers have long ago seen through these problems. If God is love then he is not sovereign (evil obviously happens, so God must be powerless to stop it), but if he is sovereign then he is not love (he is able to stop evil from happening but chooses not to). Both beliefs simply ignore the contradictions and logical conclusions, while anti-theists declare that God cannot possibly exist because he is self-contradictory. I encourage you to take a look at [Calvinism leads to universalism](#) and the excellent conversation following. One comment seemed particularly well-stated in exposing unconditional election as the common root of both views:

As English Puritanism evolved, it did lead to unitarian universalism, in both the US and England, and rather quickly. Part of this is due to its emphasis on the role of election. Rather than the emphasis being on choice (which emphasis I see all over the pages of the New Testament), the imbalanced emphasis on election seems directly related to a universalizing trajectory. I simply do not think the moral intuitions of men and women can sustain at one and the same time election as Calvinists understand it and the moral life of choosing. If they do not give up on teaching election traditionally taught, then they cannot for long live with the conclusion that we were born to go to hell and only a few born to go to heaven. This is too morally repugnant to keep present to the soul as a continual theme. It is interesting how long people will hold on to the doctrine of election (traditionally conceived), even if it leads to universalism, a strange situation. (edited)

So it would seem that to put God in any kind of vacuum (love or sovereignty) is a self-defeating position. But what happens if we remove God from the contrived vacuums? Many have tried and failed to reconcile both the sovereignty and love of God, but debates such as this never seemed to have been deemed of great importance to the apostles. Can it be possible that they considered such questions rather like a fish pondering the existence of water? The answer is love, very well-stated in yet another comment at that article:

I would preserve free will, even if I were allowed to choose between election of all to heaven and free will with not all saved, for the same reason that God did: One cannot have a real relationship of love without the possibility of rejection and of choosing the loved even in the face of difficulty. I think that love is the higher and more primary rationale over moral responsibility, and that moral responsibility is the corollary of freely willed love. That is, it is necessary to make how God deals with rejection of his love (i.e., hell, annihilation) moral.

One might expect the Universalist to see that love isn't love if it isn't free, and if it's free then it must allow love to be rejected. Yet one might also expect the Calvinist to see that if God is truly sovereign then he has the right to allow people to have free will, and he can even let them influence his decisions or actions. And one might also expect the anti-theist to see that only a loving God would, in spite of his sovereignty, allow his creatures to defy him and reject his love.

In the Bible, God is *described* as sovereign, just, holy, etc., but love is the only thing he is said to *be*; God doesn't merely *have* love, he *is* love. Therefore, his sovereignty can never operate without it. Justice and mercy are not incompatible but complementary; each by itself would deny the nature of God. Jesus' sacrifice is what allowed mercy without violating justice. So there will be ultimate justice as well as ultimate mercy, and which we receive depends completely on our personal choice regarding the love of God extended by grace through faith in the risen Jesus.

But keep in mind that all these things extend beyond this life; justice isn't denied forever though it may be delayed. Yet at the same time, even eternity isn't guaranteed to change people from rejecting God to accepting him. It's quite probable that this particular choice will be denied once we leave earth; otherwise we have to concede that people could choose to reject God after having been in heaven.

The objection then arises, "But that's crazy! Nobody in hell would choose to stay there, and nobody in heaven would choose to leave." Yet we know from experience that this is not true; many who have been in prison are released

only to commit their crimes again and be sent right back. Anti-theists tend to take the attitude that to bow to God is far more distasteful than the agonies of hell, and some have stated openly that they would never regret their choice. (This was actually the point of an early episode of Star Trek called [The Menagerie](#): “Humans’ history shows them to have a hatred for captivity, even if it is pleasant and benevolent.”) Of course nobody wants to suffer, but given a choice between suffering and bowing to God, many people’s pride is so great that they would prefer suffering. This may be at least part of what the Bible means by “the secret of lawlessness” (2 Thes. 2:7). And it is the sin of pride which made Satan what he is, and will be forever.

At the heart of such choices, besides pride, is really faith. The Christian trusts God to be like a father rather than a slave owner, while the unbeliever trusts that either there is no afterlife or it won’t be like the Bible says it will. The Christian trusts that there will be justice at last for victims and soothing for the oppressed, while the anti-theist isn’t concerned about unpunished evildoers or innocent victims.

But what about the Calvinist and the Universalist? They fare no better than the anti-theist, because the Calvinist denies the injustice of sending babies to hell while the Universalist denies the injustice of sending murderers to heaven. The fact is that all three perspectives fail to follow their beliefs to their logical conclusions, and all three have a distorted definition of love and power.

This life is a test and the world is under the temporary jurisdiction of Satan (John 12:31, 2 Cor. 4:4, Eph. 2:2, 1 John 5:19). We should expect only bad things to happen here, but the fact that good things happen too is proof that God still puts limits on Satan’s sovereignty, stolen by trickery as it was. Our task is to choose where to put our faith and to have that faith tested, and we cannot demand a chance to change our answers after the test has been graded since that would be most unfair to those who passed it legitimately.

When you consider where the arguments lead and test them for consistency, you have a choice to make. If we love the lost we will do everything we can to implore them to reconcile with God through Jesus, because terrible times are

about to come to the earth; Jesus told of a time when “there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again” (Mat. 24:21). If God is love, sovereign, just, merciful, and holy — not just a few of those but all of them — then we can only conclude that the time of choosing is temporary:

So while it is still called Today, if you hear his voice don't harden your hearts... And who did he swear would never enter his rest? The disbelieving. Now we can see that they were not able to enter because of distrust. So then, beware that while the promise of entering his rest is left open you are not left out, because we too have been brought the good news. But hearing the word did them no good because it was not mixed with faith. (Heb. 3:15-4:2)

Calvinism must come to grips with the damage it does to the *love* of God, and Universalism must come to grips with the damage it does to the *holiness* of God. Focus on the love of God and remember that love must be free; this will answer any objection about various scriptures typically offered as proof that God is unloving, weak, or self-contradictory. We cannot watch people run toward the edge of a cliff and do nothing to warn them, or to deny that they'll fall to their deaths; we must speak the whole truth if we care. But above all, we must know the God we worship.

## Universalism

Universalism teaches that all souls will eventually go to heaven, rather than being destroyed (annihilationism) or being conscious of eternal torment. We will examine this teaching and see if it holds up to both scripture and reason.

Universalism claims that a loving God would not demand payment to reconcile, especially with blood; what decent person demands restitution for a broken relationship? This objection ignores the fact that there is more going on here than *reconciliation*; there is also *redemption* (Gal. 4:5, Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 1:18) and *ransom* (Mat. 20:28, 1 Tim. 2:6, Heb. 9:15). When Adam and Eve sinned, they essentially “left home” and renounced God as their Father, selling themselves and all their offspring into the orphanage of sin. But Jesus came to

be the way back to God by buying back the world with his own blood. Rather than this being a case of a bloodthirsty god or an abusive person who requires payment for the relationship, it is the rescue of all humanity from an evil abductor and hostile kingdom.

Universalism argues that no one can pay for someone else's sins (Ps. 49:7), so Jesus was not being punished but only giving an example. However, in John 15:13 we see that Jesus said he did in fact lay down his life for others, and 1 John 2:2 states that he was "the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world." Isaiah 53 also clearly describes the punishment Jesus took for everyone. Yet this is not at all equivalent to one citizen taking a criminal sentence for another, but like a parent paying the penalty incurred by their child. The child is not liable or able to pay it yet the victim must be compensated. So it is with Jesus' sacrifice; he paid what we could not. The price for our adoption was too high for us, and adoptions are always paid by the parents rather than the orphans.

Universalism teaches that God will forgive everyone, because Jesus paid for all sin whether they know he did or not. Yet Scripture clearly states that salvation is by faith in the risen Jesus (Eph. 2:8-9). Those who rejected him in this life are demanding to be separated from him for all eternity, and God will reluctantly grant their demand (Ezk. 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9).

As for those who didn't know, Rom. 1:18-32 and Acts 17:30 show that everyone has the evidence they need for proof that there is a God, but spreading the gospel (good news) about Jesus is our command to carry out (Mat. 28:19-20). Yet even if we fail, we know God will be fair, just, and compassionate to those who truly had no way of knowing about Jesus. We also see in the Gospels and Acts many instances where God heard the prayers of those honestly seeking him, and he sent people to tell them the gospel. All who have the mental capacity to grasp the concepts of right and wrong must choose, and we can trust God to make sure all who seek him will hear the gospel. Jesus bought us all a gift, but a gift cannot be forced on anyone. And besides all of that, how loving would it be to give a murderer the same eternal life as their victim? Love does not do away with justice, because God is both loving and holy.

But doesn't this mean that accepting Jesus is unnecessary, since those who either can't understand the gospel or never heard it will go to heaven anyway? Wouldn't it be better not to make them responsible by telling them the gospel? Remember that it is Jesus who commanded us to spread the gospel; why the command was given is not for us to judge.

Another Universalism argument is that God would never base salvation on what we believe or which god we follow; what matters is whether we're sincere and do good things. But John 3:14-18 says the opposite: It is faith in Jesus— not our own righteousness— that saves us. Certainly anyone who has reconciled to God through faith in Jesus will want to please him by doing good, and those who claim to belong to Jesus but do evil are either lying or very misguided; see Rom. 6:1-2, 7:4-6.

Universalism claims that as long as someone says they love Jesus and trust him to save them, they must be considered Christians, no matter what else they may believe or what other gods they honor. But the gospel is not just believing in any claimed Jesus or Christ. We must put our trust in the Jesus who died for us (Mat. 16:21, 17:22, 1 John 2:2, 4:10), who rose from the dead as predicted (Acts 17:30-31, 1 Cor. 15:1-5), who is God in the flesh (Col. 2:9), who was worshiped as God (Mt. 2:11, 14:33, 28:9,17, John 9:35-38, Heb. 1:6), and who will return for his people (John 14:1-3, Acts 1:11). God also said in the Old Testament that there is no other God (Isaiah 42:8-9, 45:5,18,22, 46:9). So any God or Jesus who does not share all these attributes is a fake, and the true God/Jesus cannot be joined to the false.

Another argument is that a loving God would never send anyone to eternal punishment, not even Satan. Yet by that standard, a loving God would never allow any temporary suffering either, even in this life. Satan was the highest created being, perfect and beautiful, yet he rebelled against God though he had never experienced suffering and knew God was real. There is no excuse for that.

Universalism argues that temporary suffering will eventually get the lost to turn to God for relief, and then they will be saved. But would a loving God value a confession made under duress? Not even human courts accept this.

And would a loving God say to anyone, “I am going to torment you until you love me”? This is not how healthy relationships work, which Universalists of all people should understand.

Another argument is that nobody would choose eternal suffering over eternal bliss with God in heaven, so it would have to be God sending them there, not their own choice. Yet there are sane people who hate God and have said they’d rather suffer for eternity than worship him. God has explicitly stated that he doesn’t want this for anyone (Ezek. 18:23, 2 Peter 3:9), but there has to be a place for those who do not want to spend eternity with him. And since God is the source of all good, then the place of “not God” must be the place of nothing good.

Universalism insists that no one in heaven could be happy knowing their loved ones are in eternal conscious torment or forever destroyed. But who is to say that God is incapable of taking away painful memories? Everything we see of the beings in heaven is joyful praise to God, including for the fact that God punishes the wicked and avenges his children (Deut. 32:35, Psalm 79:10, Rev. 6:10, 11:18), without any allowance for those the righteous might miss.

## **Conclusion**

If Universalism is true, then no one should ever have had to suffer at all, there was no need for Jesus to die or rise again, there is no need to spread the gospel, and there is no point in being a Christian at all. If what people believe is irrelevant, then all Christian martyrs have died in vain, and every Christian missionary has only been needlessly laying responsibility on people.

If Universalism is true then all gods are the same, so God is hopelessly self-contradictory and cannot exist. It’s like saying someone went to the hardware store when they really went to the grocery store, since both are buildings where goods are sold. Differences matter.

If Universalism is true, then the Gospel is not, because they are mutually exclusive (both cannot be true at the same time). Not every binary (either/or) is false or bad. And if the Gospel is true, then it is imperative that Christians try

to convince (by persuasion, not force or trickery) as many people as possible to believe the same as we do. Universalism makes everything irrelevant and pointless.

## Conditionalism

In [The Nature of Hell: An Eternal Punishment or Eternal Torment?](#), respected prophecy teacher Dr. David Reagan offers what he calls the **conditionalist** view of the fate of the lost, as opposed to what he terms the **traditionalist** view. His presentation of both views will be briefly summarized, and then a counter-argument to his conclusion will be offered. For convenience, **traditionalist** will be abbreviated as TRAD, and **conditionalist** as COND. Likewise, Old and New Testament will be abbreviated as OT and NT respectively.

Dr. Reagan begins with some definitions of various terms in scripture used for the place of the dead. The OT does not say much about it beyond poetic expression and passing reference, and we certainly wouldn't want to get precise theology about it from there. But we are given more detail and precision in the NT, which Dr. Reagan explains in the article. The most important detail in his description is that he equates hell with the Lake of Fire, a permanent prison originally designed for the devil and his angels.

Then Dr. Reagan prefaces his case with the acknowledgment that regardless of the differences in the two views, hell is a terrible place that should be avoided by any means. Yet there is a problem with the logic of a temporary punishment: If the lost are ultimately to be destroyed, what is the purpose of the suffering? We will return to this central question later. Above all, he stresses the fact that this is not an issue over which Christians should divide or retain hostility toward each other.

Before Dr. Reagan examines the duration of hell, he gives a fair and accurate description of TRAD. But then he questions the willingness of TRAD to consider other viewpoints, due to their being held by many cults denying the reality of hell completely. But his assertion that **fear** is the reason TRAD will not "dare to challenge" its own view must be challenged. Dr. Reagan has already

acknowledged the quality and faithfulness of TRAD believers, which makes this questioning of their character inconsistent. Many do indeed question their own beliefs and reach their conclusions out of such examinations rather than fear. The mere fact that one may change their mind does not make the former belief erroneous. This entire point is not only unfair to TRAD believers, but also irrelevant; it is the *teaching* that is being questioned, not the *teachers*.

Now Dr. Reagan begins to examine the difficulties he sees with TRAD teachings. He sees TRAD as impugning the character of God, as he deems eternal torment incompatible with the love and justice of God, turning him into “a cosmic sadist”. Yet one could as easily accuse God of such sadism by a cursory glance at human history, which is filled with the suffering of the innocent. Critics of our faith point to the pervasive evil of the world as proof that God is indeed sadistic, or at least indifferent, if they believe he exists at all. Who would say that ten years of torture, rape, neglect, or other suffering is in any way better or less sadistic than ten million years of such suffering? The duration is irrelevant.

Dr. Reagan then cites several OT examples of God immediately destroying people without first making them suffer, arguing that this proves God does not ever engage in prolonged torment of his enemies. Points are well taken that God never ordered the torture of criminals, and even animal sacrifices were to be done quickly and humanely... but of course, animals were not sinners, so this doesn't bolster the argument.

Yet those same ancient laws also ordered “an eye for an eye”, a cost to be paid, even if the loss or injury was due to negligence. Taking someone's eye certainly causes more than momentary suffering. Granted that the eye is not continuously plucked out, but the one losing the eye will never get it back and must suffer the rest of their natural life without it. And how much punishment did the nation of Israel endure whenever they defied God? Generations of them suffered the wrath of God all their lives for deeds done by their ancestors. Clearly, God's judgments are not always quick and short-lived.

Dr. Reagan then argues that the term “second death” conflicts with TRAD. But the conflict is really with the definition of death he is using. Certainly the

death of a physical body causes it to decompose, yet it is never completely gone. But if death means separation, the conflict disappears. At physical death the body is separated from the spirit, but at spiritual death (which TRAD defines as “second”) the spirit is separated from God forever. Dr. Reagan notes that the term “second death” only appears in Revelation, but that same book also states that it is the Lake of Fire itself (Rev. 20:14, 21:8), which includes the souls of those who took the Mark of the Beast, the Beast itself, and the False Prophet. Since the torment of the latter is conscious and eternal, there is no justification for saying that the human souls in that same place will not suffer eternally and consciously as well, though Dr. Reagan will argue to the contrary.

Next is a discussion of the word “destruction”, which in essence is no different from that of the word “death”. If, as Dr. Reagan argues, hell is the Lake of Fire, we have already seen that this place allows eternal conscious suffering in spite of terms like “death” and “destruction”. He also cites the phrase “eternal destruction” from 2 Thes. 1:9 as meaning “eternally destroyed, not eternally being destroyed”. But is there any such thing as being *temporarily* destroyed? If destruction means permanent nonexistence, then prefacing it with “eternal” is redundant. At any rate, this passage is simply saying that God will wreak vengeance on his enemies, and it must be considered along with all other teachings about the fate of the lost.

Dr. Reagan makes a similar argument with regards to the word “punish”, such that eternal *punishment* is not the same as eternal *punishing*. Yet if one ceases to exist, one is not being punished eternally. The fact that it’s called punishment tells us that it’s being experienced by someone, and when prefaced by “eternal” the meaning is inescapable. The -ing suffix does not change this. This becomes clearer if we say something like “The judgment against the traitor was eternal banishment from the country”. Would the duration of the banishment change if instead the word had been “banishing”? Not at all, since banishment is a state of being that does not require the judge to keep banishing the traitor forever.

Dr. Reagan unwittingly supports this counter-argument in noting that “Likewise, the Bible speaks of eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12). But this does

not mean that Christ will continue the act of redemption eternally.” Since our redemption was accomplished “once for all” yet has continuing consequences, so also does the “punishment” of the wicked have lasting consequences. Dr. Reagan is arguing that the consequences are simply that the wicked cease to exist, but lack of existence cannot be made to mean “punishment”. Granted that capital punishment means the criminal no longer exists in our physical world, but we cannot arbitrarily apply the physical to the spiritual. Calvinism makes the same error when it takes spiritual death as exactly like physical death, in that the physically dead cannot hear or see (or sin, if they were consistent with their analogy).

Then Dr. Reagan makes the same argument as standard Annihilationism: that “the smoke of their torment rises forever” only means the smoke, not the torment. But smoke is a result, not a cause; that is, it indicates something being burned. If the smoke rises forever, so also must the burning go on forever. And if the burning goes on forever, there must be something forever being burned. We might see this problem more clearly by citing “the sign of the Son of Man”; surely where the sign is, so also is the Son of Man. Or as the saying goes, “Where there’s smoke, there’s fire”. Again Dr. Reagan argues, as does Annihilationism, that this all speaks of consequences rather than continual punishment. Yet we have already presented the counter-argument that as with banishment, punishment is a state of being rather than a mere result.

Next Dr. Reagan argues that the human soul/spirit is not immortal in its created state, but that it only becomes eternal at salvation (no attempt is made to explain how the souls of those who die as babies go to heaven). He cites 1 Tim. 6:15-16 as proof that only God is immortal, yet this would defeat his own argument as well, since it’s in the present tense (God **is**, not was). This claim would also contradict the earlier admission that the fallen angels will suffer forever. Clearly Paul is saying that only God had no beginning, not that only God will live forever.

It’s never wise to base an argument on a single verse, and Dr. Reagan offers nothing else to support this one about mortal souls. And if only the redeemed have eternal souls, then who are the dead that are raised and judged and sent to the Lake of Fire? If their souls are as mortal as their bodies, then why don’t

their souls die at the same time as their bodies? What purpose would a non-sadistic God have in making their souls live in torment for either a minute or a millennium (or more, depending on exactly when in human history they died), raise them up to be judged, and then annihilate them in fire? This argument for COND is no improvement at all over TRAD. There is no sense in punishing the wicked if they are to be annihilated, just as there's no sense in punishing a criminal who is to be put to death. Of course some societies do this anyway, but it has nothing to do with justice or protecting society, but only the sadism of the punishers. Yet COND would make God equally sadistic.

Dr. Reagan makes a brief appeal to historical concepts both in scripture and outside of it, but this again is irrelevant if we want to study scripture. All kinds of ideas can be found among professing believers of all ages, and mere proximity to the time of Christ is no guarantee of orthodoxy. After all, Paul wrote much of the NT in an effort to combat false teachings in his own day. So as Dr. Reagan admitted, history cannot help us in this regard. Yet it wouldn't have mattered anyway, since it's not history but scripture that carries the authority to teach us the fate of the lost. Even if all Christian writings after the last NT book was written supported COND, they would not carry any authority in this debate.

If we end the rebuttal to this challenge of TRAD as it began— with a question about the character of God— then we would argue that the honor of God is not salvaged by having him first torment souls, then pronounce judgment, and then wipe them out. Though the fallen angels are eternal beings who will spend eternity in conscious suffering, they too had a beginning, just as humans do. So if the character of God is sullied by the eternal suffering of one group of beings who had a beginning, then it's also sullied if the same holds true for the other group of beings. Since Dr. Reagan acknowledges the eternal conscious torment of fallen angels, then he cannot justify rejecting the same for fallen humans by claiming that unregenerate human souls are mortal.

Dr. Reagan is highly respected, and many have learned much from his material on eschatology over the years. He has also made his teachings available for free online. What is being challenged here is not his character or faithfulness as a Christian, but only his position on this particular matter. He is certainly

not the only popular Bible teacher to change positions on a topic, and not the only one who has moved from a valid position to an invalid one.

Certainly we can disagree on this topic, but those who are teachers are held to a higher standard (James 3:1). Ideas do have consequences, and many see the TRAD view as repugnant and turning the lost away from salvation. But the Gospel itself is such a “stumbling stone”, and any judgment from God even in this life is often cited as the reason people turn away from Jesus. So this reaction in itself is not a reason to reject a teaching. What matters is whether God values justice as much as mercy, holiness as much as compassion, and love for the victims as much as love for the perpetrators.

## **Conclusion**

If there must be some form of government, then it's our obligation to pray for that government to leave people in peace and bring evildoers to justice. Every human government will become corrupt in time; the cycle never ends until God intervenes. Our loyalty as Christians must always be to God and righteousness above all, not blindly given to the wicked just because they are the state. Worship God, not government.

## **Original Sin**

Are people born vile sinners deserving of eternal torment? That is the teaching of Original Sin, and there is more about this under Calvinism. Below are some claims and rebuttals on the topic.

### **Human spirit literally died when Adam and Eve sinned.**

Not one scripture teaches this, expressed or implied. All references to spiritual death are figurative and indicate separation and captivity. Adam and Eve became mortal when they ate the fruit, then Adam was forbidden to eat the remedy (the fruit of the Tree of Life), and further curses were pronounced on nature, due to his having openly blamed God for his sin (Gen. 3:12,17-19,22-24). Neither does any scriptural reference outside of Genesis

imply such a concept. Since those who are in Christ have “died to sin” (Rom. 6:2, 7:9, Col. 2:20), literal spiritual death would make this mean that Christians are incapable of sinning.

## **Everyone was born a sinner, so none of us can avoid sinning.**

Aside from exaggerated expressions of guilt and remorse in poetry, no scripture teaches this. What it does teach is that death came into the world because of the first sin (Rom. 5:12), and that though everyone dies, not all sinned the same as Adam (Rom. 5:14). Since Adam and Eve sinned in an environment where there was no suffering and with direct access to God, and since they were not created with any “sin nature”, then none of those excuses can explain why they sinned. So there was some other cause, and that cause was free will. That is, we sin because we choose to. And if people can sin in an optimal environment, the likelihood of sinning increases greatly in a hostile environment. We should also note that Rom. 5:12-21 (esp. 15, 18-19) becomes hopelessly incoherent if we try to keep to the literal meanings of “all” and “many”; if all without exception were made sinners, then all without exception were made righteous.

## **We sin by choice so we’re responsible and accountable, in spite of the fact that our inherited nature can choose nothing else.**

If we sin because our nature compels us, then we cannot be held responsible for it. A moral choice requires the option to sin or not, rather than simply which sin to commit. And if God gives us this nature, then God is still the cause of our sin, just as a robot can only do what it was programmed to do; the programmer cannot escape responsibility. The teaching that God would create us as sinners, yet punish us for sinning, is an insult to the holiness and justice of God. God is love, and nothing God does can operate in a moral vacuum. God cannot be less just and fair than humans, and even monkeys know when they’re not being treated fairly ([source](#). Disclaimer: The article’s references to evolution are neither relevant nor endorsed by this author.)

## **Sin is passed down through males, which is why Jesus could not have a human father.**

First of all, there is no “sin gene”, and scripture directly refutes this claim (Ezk. 18:4,13b,17b, etc.). If spiritual death can be inherited, so also can spiritual life, meaning the children of saved parents should be born sinless. It is self-contradictory to believe that only the lost can pass down their spiritual nature, and absurd to argue that dead spirits can reproduce at all. If it is then argued that the spirits of children come from God, this would make God the author of sin. But rather than throw out God as the creator of souls, we should throw out the idea of inheritable sin.

Secondly, Jesus’ earthly mother Mary was a sinner like anyone else (Luke 1:47 “my Savior”) and had a human father like anyone else; there is nothing in scripture to make her or her parents sinless. The idea that human flesh is intrinsically evil comes from Gnosticism, not the Bible. So since human flesh is not intrinsically evil, Jesus’ lack of a human father had nothing to do with inheritable spiritual qualities, and there was no need for Mary to be sinless. Further, scripture states that Jesus was made in the resemblance of sinful flesh and like us in every way (Rom. 8:3, Heb. 2:17), while other references state that Jesus was sinless (2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5). Having eliminated the claim of inherently evil flesh, the only explanation remaining for Jesus having no human father was because he is God (Isaiah 9:6, Mat. 1:23, Heb. 1:3, 8-9), who took on human flesh at a point in time and became the Son as well (Isaiah 9:6, Phil. 2:5-11, Heb. 1:5-6).

## **When Adam and Eve sinned, they were no longer made in the image of God, so no one else has been made in God’s image since then. We only acquire that nature when we’re saved.**

Gen. 9:6 and James 3:9 indicate that all people are still made in God’s image.

## Conclusion

The teaching of an inheritable sin nature did not originate in scripture, but came instead from the influential teachings of Augustine who, even after leaving Manichaeism, still held to some of Mani's principles ([source](#)). A quote from there:

Manichaeism offered Augustine a way to accommodate his conflicts: he could pursue his career, and retain his partner, while purging his sins through his service to the pure Elect; and he could blame those sins on his lower, alien nature, which like the material world had been made by the power of evil, but which his true self would eventually shed. Manichaeism also responded to his need, instilled by his childhood, for the name of Christ, and his initial distaste for the Christian scriptures. He could regard the Bible as a crude and contaminated attempt at the truth, whereas the Manichaean scriptures offered both the name of Christ and what seemed to be a profound understanding of the universe and of human life.

Though Augustine eventually left Manichaeism, he retained its teaching of the sinful nature of mankind. A thorough examination of this belief can be found [here](#). Augustine argued that if it were unjust for God to send babies to hell, then it would also be unjust for God to allow babies to suffer at all. Yet this leads to the conclusion that God should therefore never have created any being that would defy him, because some might otherwise choose to do evil and set consequences in motion that would affect the innocent. So Augustine's teaching creates an impossible dilemma: God could not be just or loving if he gave people free will, yet creating them without free will would make God responsible for sin.

Augustine's dilemma is solved by acknowledging that free will necessarily involves true choice between good and evil, and that people must either enjoy or suffer the consequences of their— and others' — choices. Only people free to choose can offer genuine love and devotion, so God would not create puppets or robots. That is, the love of God (his nature) requires the free will of people.

But what of the innocent suffering for the sins of others? Justice is not denied forever; God will eventually compensate everyone accordingly. Since people cannot help being born in a wicked world and a body that has physical demands, God offers a genuine choice for everyone to be generously compensated in eternity. That some choose to reject this offer is no fault of God's, and that other choices besides heaven and hell don't exist is no denial of justice or mercy.

Free will is a matter of understanding, consent, and genuine choice, and love cannot be genuine unless given freely. Thus the teaching of Original Sin stands in direct opposition to the love and justice of God. Augustine saw it as simply the mirror image of Jesus dying for us all without our request or consent, yet this is a false comparison, since Jesus' death and resurrection do not force anyone to accept him, but simply make the offer possible. Otherwise we would make nonsense of scriptures such as Rom. 5:9-10 and 2 Cor. 5:18-20, which tell us both that we are reconciled and that we must be reconciled. One person cannot force another to reconcile; by definition, reconciliation requires the willing, unforced agreement of both parties. The Bible is replete with God's injunctions to choose wisely, which would be rendered a cruel hoax if Original Sin were true.

If we believe we were born sinners, then we must also believe that we're not responsible for our sin; there is no escaping this conclusion. All of us know that we choose to sin, and we know that we're only held responsible for what we choose to do. To know all of this, yet at the same time cling to what tradition and many (but certainly not all) scholars teach about Original Sin, is to believe in a contradiction, and one that cannot be supported by scripture. See also [this source](#).

## Was the Apostle Paul a Karaite?

Was the apostle Paul, the Pharisee formerly known as Saul of Tarsus, a champion of the faith and founder of Christian theology, or a charlatan leading a perversion of Judaism?

### The Apostle Paul

Following is a series of claims and rebuttals regarding the legitimacy of Paul as a genuine apostle of Jesus Christ.

**Claim:** None of the true apostles supported Paul or acknowledged him as one of them. Peter did not vouch for Paul (2 Peter 3:16), because 2 Peter was not written by Peter.

**Rebuttal:** It's an act of desperation to omit an entire letter of the New Testament in order to take away an explicit endorsement for Paul. But even without 2 Peter, there is still plenty of endorsement: Ananias (Acts 9:15), Barnabas (Acts 9:26-28), Luke (chronicled Paul's travels throughout Acts), as well as the deafening silence of all the New Testament writers regarding his being a false apostle or enemy of the Gospel. He was known personally by no less than Peter, James, and John, and founded a great many of the early faith communities. If Luke cannot be trusted since he was sympathetic to Paul, then one must rip out the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, yet critics of Paul often use material from those sources in their arguments. And of course, to only distrust the parts that support Paul would beg the question.

Ironically, the only evidence that any alleged apostles questioned Paul's apostleship comes from Paul himself. The critics allege that John's references to false Christs (1 John 2:18-20, Rev. 2:2) refer to Paul, but there is nothing to support the charge. (See the "Claim: Paul was an antinomian" for more.)

**Claim:** Paul was never a true apostle and opposed them.

**Rebuttal:** In making this charge, the critics often show ignorance of the fact that not all true apostles were of The Twelve. There were at least seventy Je-

sus sent out and explicitly named “apostles” (Luke 6:13). And if this is to be rejected because it was written by Luke, then where are the warnings and refutations by The Twelve? Where are the accounts of them referring to Paul as a fake? Surely John, the closest to Jesus, and not one to shy away from confrontation (3 John 1:9-10), would have exposed Paul as a false teacher bringing a false Gospel, and he would have listed at least a few of the times when Paul was opposed and exposed.

**Claim:** Paul was both a Pharisee and an antinomian.

**Rebuttal:** One wonders how Paul could be both a Pharisee (legalistic) and an antinomian (lawless) at the same time. But the claim is that **all** the Pharisees were antinomians, because they rejected God’s laws for their own (the [Talmud](#) or oral traditions). Yet there is no evidence that Paul taught anything promoted in the Talmud. One is hard-pressed to look over its teachings and match them to Paul’s, and it “poisons the well” (and assigns guilt by association) to presume Paul still held to the Talmud after his conversion. His statement in the present tense about being a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) was clearly for the sole purpose of dividing the Sanhedrin that had convened to prosecute him, just as he used his Roman citizenship to his advantage when needed. One must also ask why the Pharisees there were upset with him at all. In fact, it was they who kept hounding Paul throughout his travels, for doing what his modern critics accuse him of doing. That is, **if Paul was teaching the Talmud, why were all the other Pharisees trying to kill him?**

So since Paul was not guilty of teaching the Talmud, his critics must appeal to his teaching Christians that they were free from the law of Moses. The first place to look for non-Pauline teachings on this matter is of course Hebrews, which is no longer thought to have been written by Paul. Yet the critics **must** reject it in its entirety since it teaches, as Paul does, that Christians are not under the law of Moses. Yet not even James— widely but erroneously thought to uphold the law of Moses for Christians— insisted that it be kept. At the most, his letter can be interpreted as teaching salvation by works. But the works are not specified as keeping the law of Moses; rather, they are of doing good deeds in general.

Yet the critics miss this key point: Paul never taught that **Jews** who were still outside of faith in the risen Messiah Jesus were no longer under the law of Moses. He taught this **only for those who became Christians**. And of course, no Gentiles were ever under that law at all.

**Claim:** Paul contradicted Jesus.

**Rebuttal:** The critics of Paul insist that only the actual quotes of Jesus can be trusted. But even the Gospels do not have the actual words of Jesus, since he spoke Aramaic and was only directly quoted on two occasions (Mat. 27:46, Mark 5:41, 15:34). Yet Paul did not contradict Jesus anyway. Jesus did indeed keep the law of Moses, because he had to be a flawless sacrifice. He also had to fulfill all the prophecies about that sacrifice. And everything he said, he said to Jews before the cross and before the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. He came expressly for “the lost sheep of Israel” (Mat. 15:24), not the as-yet unknown Congregation (“church”). And as already noted, Paul never taught freedom from the law of Moses to Jews but only to Christians. Nothing Paul taught violated or contradicted anything Jesus taught, either to Jews or to Christians.

**Claim:** Jesus treated women as equal to men, but Paul was a misogynist.

**Rebuttal:** For very detailed rebuttals to common misinterpretations of Paul on this topic, see [this book](#) or [this commentary](#).

**Claim:** Paul (and/or Luke) was a liar.

**Rebuttal:** This ridiculous charge is based upon two allegedly contradictory accounts of his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-9, 22:6-21, 26:12-18). Acts 9:7 states that the others traveling with Paul heard a voice but saw no one, while Acts 22:9 states that they saw a light but did not understand the sound (there is scholarly debate on whether they did not hear any sound at all, or simply did not understand it, based on the Greek grammar). Yet none of this is contradictory; seeing a light is not the same as seeing Jesus himself, and there is no irrefutable proof that the voice was understood. The same is true for one account having more detail than the other. And had all instances

been identical, one would rightly suspect a made-up story; people often add or omit detail upon later tellings of an experience.

**Claim:** Paul believed he was a co-savior with Christ.

**Rebuttal:** Of all the charges against Paul, this one is easily the most preposterous, and it can only be made by taking statements out of context. Paul clearly loathed his former life and considered all his past accomplishments a pile of manure (Phil. 3:8). He also considered himself the least of all the apostles (1 Cor. 15:9) and never denied being a sinner. And he stated explicitly that he did not die for anyone (1 Cor. 1:13). Yet in spite of all that, his critics will take statements like Col. 1:24 at face value and ignore the context in which they were said. The full text is, “I now celebrate my sufferings for your sakes and do my share to complete in my own flesh whatever is lacking in **the physical sufferings of Christ, for the sake of his body which is the Congregation.**” It was never the physical sufferings of Christ that saved us, but his death and resurrection, as Paul himself even said (1 Cor. 15:1-5). In addition, Jesus said that whoever followed him must “take up their cross” and would suffer persecution. But note also that Paul says the body he refers to is the Congregation, not the physical body of Jesus.

## Conclusion

The alleged case against Paul as a true, hand-picked apostle of Jesus is based upon fallacy and failure to consider context, to such an extreme as to make the canon of the New Testament depend entirely on which parts support Paul and which can be twisted to condemn him. Critics engage in a double standard by only accepting from Paul and others the parts that support their accusations. There are even some who will take the fact that Paul was picked by Jesus as insignificant, since Jesus also picked Judas. Such poor logic and cherry-picking renders the criticisms of Paul too absurd to take seriously. Yet because of the sheer number of such critics, we must expose them as they so gleefully expose Paul. Let them endure the same scrutiny. (See also [this excellent satire](#) on how people today would rebuke Paul for his letter to the Galatians.)

## The Karaites

Now let's turn to Karaite Judaism, because it brings some important points to the forefront of criticisms of the Christian faith and the New Testament. From experiences with both Jews and atheists, the common attitude is that if you're a Bible literalist, you **must** agree with expert Jewish interpretations, because the Tanakh is their book and we Christians have nothing to say about it. Never mind that with the exception of Luke, all the New Testament writers were Jews, who couldn't and wouldn't have invented a risen Savior. The disciples hid in a locked room after Jesus' crucifixion and were dejected because they thought he would restore the kingdom to Israel at that time.

Now read through [this article](#) on whether, as some claim, Jesus was actually a Karaite. Here are additional resources:

- The Karaites, a medieval Jewish sect
- Karaism
- more about Karaism
- frequently asked questions about Karaism

The fact remains that Jesus rose from the dead, and no amount of a claimed superior conclusion can change that. It's pointless to debate whether it **should** have happened when in fact it did. Here are some resources on Jesus' resurrection:

- [Jesus of Testimony \(full-length video\)](#)
- [The King of Nations \(full-length video\)](#)
- Testimony of the Evangelists

Points raised in the literature:

- 1 Cor. 15:3-4 "according to the scriptures" Genesis 3:15, Psalm 16:10, Isaiah 53:1-12, Hosea 6:2, Jonah 1:17, Daniel 9:24-26, Zechariah 12:10,13:7
- Psalm 2:7 "today I have become your father"
- Psalm 110:1 "the Lord says to my Lord"

- Israel was exiled more than once for disobedience to the law of Moses which they were bound by covenant to obey, and the temple was destroyed in 70 AD just as Jesus predicted, because they rejected their promised Messiah— and none of his Jewish critics disputed the idea of a Messiah-Savior. While Karaites would dismiss Jesus’ critics as Pharisees and Talmudists, the fact is that they and Jesus were both referencing **Moses and the Levitical law**.
- Isaiah 53 has to be twisted beyond recognition to make it about Israel rather than the Messiah who would suffer and die for his people.
- dying for the sins of others (not necessarily karaite)
- sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19)
- sacrifice of animals in law of Moses
- “The soul who sins will die” (Ezekiel 18:4). God extended His mercy by providing the substitute to die in place of the offerer. According to [this source](#), “We stopped offering sacrifices because we do not have a proper place to offer them.” Though the article goes on to excuse the lack of animal sacrifices, the Torah itself makes them mandatory and gives precise and strict rules for what animals to sacrifice, and when and how. Nothing in Torah says to stop the practice. Prayer and changes of heart are certainly presumed, but this hardly means that direct commands to sacrifice animals can be ignored. The article also errs in such statements as this: “the passage only says that blood is used to obtain atonement— not that blood is the sole means for obtaining atonement.” Again, they’re picking and choosing which parts are binding and using poor logic; just because sacrifice isn’t the **only** means of forgiveness hardly means sacrifice can be abandoned.

## Conclusion

Kairite Judaism at least opposes Talmudic Judaism, but it presumes to be the infallible interpreter, and it shares with Talmudism a rejection and loathing of Jesus as Messiah. The first Christians were all Jews who had **not** been looking to invent a Messiah, much less to think of Jesus as such before he did miracles and then raised himself from the dead, so they serve as hostile witnesses to this charge. Being Jews in the first century before Christianity even began, they were at least as qualified to interpret the Tanakh as Jews today, in spite of their claim that they get their teachings from Jews prior to the time of Christ. Jesus did correct and rebuke the Pharisees and Sadducees, but he also pointed

to himself as Messiah, so the Karaites cannot claim him as an early Karaite while ignoring anything he said that doesn't fit with their beliefs.

Of course, what both Karaites and Talmudists think about the New Testament, especially the apostle Paul, is refuted by Paul and his many enemies then and now. Even the secular world believes that Saul of Tarsus was a top Pharisee who suddenly turned from hunter to prey regarding Christianity, renouncing his former ways as a Pharisee. Those Pharisees hated him and tried to kill him, **not** for rejecting the **Talmud** but for teaching the end of the laws of **Moses**. Both Jesus and Paul were hated by the Pharisees and Sadducees for this. So for the Karaites to claim that the Pharisees were only and always about the Talmud is disingenuous.

Claims of one group or another being **the** authority on scripture will never be resolved here, but the fact remains that Jesus' resurrection from the dead qualifies **him** as the final authority on all this. The New Testament, of which nearly one-third consists of the letters of Paul, is all about Jesus. Without Jesus it's all just a lot of religious bickering.

## Hebrew Roots

Are Christians obligated to live under the laws of Moses? For as long as the Body of Christ (a.k.a. *church*) has existed, some have insisted that Christians must practice the law of Moses as prescribed in the Old Testament. Though some of those may concede that such practice is how we show our love to God, others make it a salvation issue, or at least a fellowship issue. Those who do not agree are often looked upon as rebellious or ignoring half the Bible. But what does that very Bible say?

### The Hebrew Roots Movement

Like all movements, the [Hebrew Roots Movement](#) has its factions, levels, and variants. But it would not be called a "movement" without having some unifying principles among the various groups. We will take a look at those unifying

principles, and warn of an inherent danger. Let's begin with some good points made at an article no longer available online:

The Hebraic Roots or Jewish Roots movement refers to various organizations with a common emphasis on recovering the “original” Jewishness of Christianity. This recovery comes through studying the Bible in its Jewish context, observing the Torah, keeping the Sabbath and festivals, avoiding the “paganism” of Christianity, affirming the existence of original Hebrew language gospels and, in some cases, denigrating the Greek text of the New Testament. Writers such as Roy Blizzard, David Bivin, Brad Young and Robert Lindsay have given much impetus to this movement.

Hebraic Roots teachers call upon believers to study Hebrew and learn about Jewish culture, which most of us can appreciate. More often than not, however, they call Gentiles to a Torah-observant and/or festival observant lifestyle as a means of drawing closer to Jesus and being conformed to His image. The implication is, if you really want to please God, if you really want to be holy, here are the rules. Even though most do not believe these observances are necessary for one's salvation, there is often an implication that this is the higher way. Scripture warns against such things.

Believers who wish to learn more about the Jewish roots of Christianity do well. Learning about the Jewish roots of Christianity can transform a black and white understanding of Scripture into “living color.” A deeper understanding of first century Judaism can also help people better understand Y'shua and His contemporaries.

(Added: see [this article](#) on whether the Sabbath was commanded and observed for all mankind from the beginning of creation.)

The line we must not cross is between going back under Torah, and studying the Old Testament for insight into Hebrew thinking, customs, and language, in order to help us better understand the New Testament. Appreciation is one thing, but legalistic performance is quite another. There is much in the way of a false or romanticized view of Christianity's early years being promoted by this movement. What danger does this pose for Christians today?

Dwight Pryor, a leading voice for evangelicals in the Jewish Roots movement, warns that some believers are forsaking Jesus and Christianity because of their growing fondness for Judaism and its teachings. They are crossing a line from appreciation to adulation of their Jewish roots. It almost seems as though these lapsing Christians believe that a special insight into their roots somehow elevates their status—as though there is an inherent superiority in being Jewish.

These people have forgotten that God loves every nation, and that all cultures have unique contributions to make to the Body of Messiah. Gentiles who say, “We are no longer Gentiles, regardless of our background” are confused and on the road to spiritual trouble. Adherents of the so-called “Two House Theory” constitute one group that has fallen into this kind of error.

The “Two House Theory” basically states that it is not the Gentiles who are the “wild branches” in the illustration of the olive tree (Rom. 11), but the “lost tribes” of Israel, the Northern Kingdom. In almost, but not every, instance where Gentiles are understood to be the subject, the 10 tribes of Israel are inserted instead. Yet at the same time, they also want to insist that Gentile Christians are grafted into the natural branches instead of the Tree; their rationale is that the natural branches are one and the same with the trunk, so to be grafted into one is to be grafted into the other. So depending on whether it suits them, they pick whichever symbolism works for their interpretation.

We must also remember that **it is utterly impossible for the Mosaic Law to be observed without a Temple and a Priesthood of Levi**. These are required components; all the Festivals cannot be properly observed without them. The response of course is to just allegorize; we can make substitutions at will and pretend we’re still observing Torah. It’s very unlikely that God would buy that.

## **Old Testament passages about the separation of Israel and the church**

We see in 2 Kings 21:7 that God has chosen Jerusalem and the temple in it for himself. This verse is very clear; there is nothing in the context to justify tak-

ing it allegorically or symbolically. In Jer. 31:31-36 the New Covenant is “with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah”, not any Gentiles, and not with the Body of Christ which is neither. The passage identifies literal, physical Israel and Judah by their attributes: They broke God’s covenant with them specifically. Further, “Only if these decrees vanish from my sight, declares the Lord, will Israel ever cease being a **nation** before me.”

Now consider Dan. 12:1. Here, the angel Michael is identified as the one who protects **Daniel’s people**— not the Gentiles and not the Body of Christ. There will also be a time of distress like no other, which Jesus also referred to in Mat. 24:15— for Daniel’s people, Israel.

## **New Testament passages about the separation of Israel and the church**

First we need to look at the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. The purpose for the meeting is stated in Acts 15:5. Some claim that they were talking about the Talmud or oral traditions, but it explicitly states that the Gentiles must keep the law of Moses. After a lengthy discussion, Peter stood up and said that what the former Pharisees were trying to do was “to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear”. James then cited a prophecy in Amos about a time when God would “return and rebuild **David’s** fallen tent”, and for a purpose: “that the rest of mankind— the Gentiles— would seek the Lord.” Paul described this also in Rom. 11:25: Israel is partially hardened against God **until** “the full number of Gentiles has come in”, as covered in more detail under Did the church replace Israel?.

As shown in that study, God had not rejected his people Israel, which Paul identifies as physical and literal descendants of Abraham, specifically the tribe of Benjamin. The divine plan was to use Israel to make Gentiles want God, and then to use Gentiles to make Israel want God. His unfinished business with Israel will be addressed once the Body of Christ has all its members. That’s what Rom. 11 is teaching. No one is grafted into Israel, and Israel has not been replaced by either Gentiles or the Body of Christ. Rom. 11:25-32 mentions the patriarchs (plural), meaning much more than just Abraham.

More importantly, God's gifts and calling are "irrevocable". These were literal and physical in the Old Testament, so there is no justification for making them figurative in the New.

The rest of the New Testament has much more to say about observance of the law, especially in the letter to the Galatians. To read these letters, especially considering them all together, is to be impressed with the forceful opposition made to anything that would rob the cross of its power and Jesus of his glory. Hebrew Roots proponents would say that the "law" referenced is not Torah, yet we would reply that Gentiles are described as "those without the law" (Rom. 2:14). Of course Gentiles had civil laws; it was only the Torah they did not have.

The letter to the Hebrews stresses the fact that with a change of priesthood comes a change of law, and Jesus is the High Priest of a new order, that being Melchizedek (Heb. 7:12-13). He was not from the tribe of Levi at all and therefore not qualified to serve as a priest under Torah. There is just no way around this fact; there is no way to claim Torah can be kept without Temple or Priesthood, so there is no way to practice Judaism honestly and Biblically.

Many will try to hold up examples found in Acts to prove the requirement of keeping Torah. This ignores the transitional nature of that period, and that the Temple and Levitical Priesthood were still active. The Apostle Paul explained why he sometimes continued to observe parts of it: He did not want to put any unnecessary stumbling blocks in front of anyone. Yet he also made it unmistakably clear that the Law was annulled and no one is **obligated** to keep it; in fact, he publicly rebuked Peter for lapsing back under Torah (Gal. 2:14). And again, now that there is no Temple or Priesthood to go with it, Judaism cannot be practiced.

Finally, in 1 Cor. 10:32 we see it explicitly stated that mankind is divided into three— not two— groups: Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God (the Body of Christ). We are neither Jews nor Gentiles, yet we inherit the **Promise to Abraham**— not the law of Moses. In fact, the entire letter to the Hebrews is all about the temporal nature of the law of Moses. Heb. 8:13 says as well that the new covenant means the first one is old and obsolete. Gal. 3:19-29 clearly

teaches that the purpose of the law of Moses was to serve as a temporary guide **until** Christ came.

You could say that this Hebrew Roots Movement is the “evil twin” of Replacement Theology. The latter claims that Israel was absorbed into the church, while the former claims the opposite. But when all scripture is considered in context, there is no way to escape the conclusion that the Law and the Promise are two mutually exclusive elements, that Torah was a “custodian” that brought us to the time for the Savior to come (Gal. 3:24), and that the Assembly is a “mystery” unknown to the Old Testament (1 Cor. 2), yet also that God is not finished with the nation of Israel, per the prophecies of Daniel, Ezekiel, and John in the Revelation.

## Conclusion

Besides the clear separation of Israel and the Body of Christ established to this point, we cannot brush aside the Millennial Kingdom passages as discussed [here](#) and [here](#). They speak in very down-to-earth terms especially in the Old Testament: crops, herds, long but mortal life, generations, animals, etc. Once allegory or the presumption of non-literalism is invoked, all discussion is reduced to mere speculation or personal preference. So anyone attempting to put the burden of the law of Moses on Christians is in clear violation of the whole of scripture.

Study Hebrew roots, but don't go back to the Law. Understand context, but don't trade our freedom in Christ for that which was unable to save and whose purpose was to symbolize what we now have. We died to the Law; let's not act like we didn't. Above all, remember Gal. 5:14.

## Detailed Analysis

### Introduction

[This article](#) defines British Israelism:

British Israelism (also called Anglo-Israelism) is a pseudo-archaeological belief that the people of the British Isles are genetically, racially, and linguistically the direct descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of ancient Israel. With roots in the 16th century, British Israelism was inspired by several 19th century English writings such as John Wilson's 1840 *Our Israelitish Origin*. Numerous British Israelite organisations were set up throughout the British Empire as well as in the United States from the 1870s onwards; a number of these organisations are independently active as of the early 21st century. In America, the idea gave rise to the Christian Identity movement. The central tenets of British Israelism have been refuted by evidence from modern archaeological, ethnological, genetic, and linguistic research.

[This one](#) is about Hebrew Roots:

These [religious organizations] included Messianic Judaism (to a very limited degree) in 1916, the Sacred Name Movement (SNM) in 1937, and the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) in the 1930s, and, later, the Hebrew Roots Movement. Thus far, the WCG has had the greatest impact on all organizations which teach these beliefs, including obedience to much of the Old Testament law, both nationally and internationally until about 1994–5.

In contrast, Hebrew Roots (or sometimes, Hebraic Roots) is a grassroots movement without an ecclesiastical superstructure and it does not adhere to the COG belief system, nor does it adhere to Messianic Judaism, or to the SNM, although there are commonalities. A number of their founders began teaching about the need to keep the 7th Day Sabbath, to observe annual Feasts, and to obey Old Testament commandments years before these topics were taught and accepted by some in the Christian churches... Batya Wootten's curiosity about the Gentile majority in many Messianic-Jewish congregations resulted in her first book about the two houses of Israel in 1988. This was later followed by her 1998 book entitled *Who is Israel* (now renamed in its 4th edition as *Redeemed Israel*).

The primary impetus for this modern movement named after the law of Moses (Torah) seems to have come from Batya Wooten's book *The Two Houses of Israel* and the organization Torah Life Ministries. Another branch is known as the Ephraimite movement or Sons of Ephraim. While the modern movement I've dubbed Torahism isn't exactly British Israelism, it definitely came from it. Whenever the Bible speaks of Gentiles, it really means the alleged ten lost tribes of Israel, such that all people in the world who come to faith in God are thus shown to be Israelites. It is sometimes known as the Two House/Two Sticks theory. This teaches that in Ezekiel 37:16-28 the ten lost tribes (Judah and some Israelites) will be grafted into the two non-lost tribes (Joseph/Ephraim and some Israelites), and that the ten are really the Gentiles. What all these groups have in common is obedience to Torah and rejection of Christianity.

## Analysis

One rebuttal to this can be found [here](#). Notice that Ezekiel 37:28 mentions "the nations", and later chapters in Ezekiel describe how these nations will bring tribute to Israel. This means that they're still Gentiles rather than part of Israel or Judah. All the language of this passage is about the twelve tribes descended from Jacob/Israel, not any Gentiles.

Eph. 2:11-21 clearly indicates that the two groups joined into one were Jews and Gentiles, not Israel and Judah or Israel and the church. It was Gentiles who were separated from Christ and excluded from Israel and Abraham's promise. And the way these two were united was by voiding the law with its commands by means of the cross. None of this references Ezekiel's "two sticks" prophecy.

Scripture also indicates that all twelve tribes were accounted for in the first century AD (Acts 26:7, James 1:1). When Jesus was presented at the temple, a prophet named Anna spoke of him, and she was from the allegedly lost tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36). The Bible itself never speaks of any tribes being lost or unrepresented, and it called the nation Israel in Jesus' day (Mat. 2:20, 10:6, Mark 15:32, Luke 2:25, John 1:49, Acts 21:28, Heb. 8:8-10, Rev. 7:4). At

Pentecost, Jews were in Jerusalem from all over the region, speaking many languages (Acts 2:5-11). They were all called Jews no matter where they lived. So the terms Jew and Israelite are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament.

The law of Moses cannot be obeyed without a temple and priestly class of Levi, including the necessity that the nation is agrarian and will bring crops and herds to sacrifice and to support the priests and poor. The sacrifice of animals was required (see Ex. 29:36, Lev. 4:31, 9:7, 14:19, 15:15, 17:11, Num. 15:25). Blood was required to consecrate things and people to the Lord (Leviticus 16:19, Hebrews 9:22). This law was being practiced in Jesus' day but ended in 70 AD. No one interpreted Hosea 6:6 as an excuse to stop the sacrifices until after the Jews were scattered and the temple destroyed.

There are two separate new covenants, one with Israel and one with the church ([chart](#) and [article](#)). Jer. 31:31-34 specifies this for Israel's new covenant:

1. It is to be with united Israel and Judah.
2. It is contrasted with the Mosaic covenant, which also was with Israel only and not with any other people.
3. It will be fulfilled after the days of judgment and affliction described in the preceding context.
4. The Law is to be written in their hearts, in contrast to the Mosaic law which was written in tables of stone.
5. YHWH will be their God and Israel will be His people; this relationship will be mutually and publicly recognized by both parties.
6. There will be no need to proclaim the truth concerning YHWH since everyone will know Him.
7. Their sins will be forgiven and forgotten.

Isaiah 61:8-9 is even more specific about the new covenant:

1. It is everlasting.
2. Israel's physical progeny will be known by the rest of the world (ergo not Israel) as blessed by God.

Jer. 32:37,41 states that the new covenant is conditioned upon Israel's return from exile, and that they will be reestablished in their ancient land. None of this pertains to the church, and the modern state of Israel is filled with unbelievers, which is required in order for remaining prophecies to be fulfilled.

Now for references to covenants in the New Testament:

### 1. Abrahamic

- Luke 1:72 the holy cov. with our ancestors
- Acts 3:25,7:8 heirs of the prophets and the cov. with our ancestors
- Gal. 3:17,4:24-28 the late-coming law does not negate the promise
- Heb. 8:7-13 the new cov. w/Israel is not like old one

### 2. Mosaic

- 2 Cor. 3:14 the veil when the old cov. is read is removed only in Christ
- Heb. 9:15 Christ mediates the new cov. of promise
- Heb. 9:20 the old cov. was between God and Israel

### 3. General

- Rom. 9:4 Israel had the covenants
- Eph. 2:12 Gentiles were excluded from Israel and the Promise

### 4. New by context

- Mat. 26:28, Mark 14:24 Jesus signed the new cov. in his blood
- Rom. 11:27 Israel and Gentiles are saved via the new cov.
- Heb. 8:8-12 quotes Jer. 31:31-34 and is the only reference to the new cov. pertaining to Israel

## The name game

Characteristic of this anti-Christian sect is the issue of the so-called Sacred Name teaching. Though the ancient Hebrews went out of their way to avoid speaking or writing the proper name of God out of a respectful fear of misusing it, this teaching insists upon doing exactly the opposite. But the precise spelling and pronunciation of this name has changed often, such that if some-

one came to faith using whatever is currently deemed improper, they must confess again for salvation. Yet this is all easily debunked by reading the Israelite-approved Greek scriptures translated before the time of Christ, the Septuagint. It used only two names for deity: *Theos* (God) and *Kurios* (Lord), regardless of the variety of Hebrew names. This proves that it was the meaning, not the syllables, that mattered most.

But the greater error is that Torahism changes the meaning of the New Testament word “faith” from trust and confidence in the risen Jesus to “faithfulness to the law”. That is, Jesus came not to fulfill the law on behalf of others but to show us how to perfectly obey it. Though this would make his sacrifice for sin pointless since sacrifices were already central to that law, Torahism uses it as the reason they no longer need the sacrificial system— yet somehow the keeping of feasts and holy days must continue.

Another claim is that in Mark 7:19 Jesus wasn’t saying that all foods were now clean (kosher), but that in the process of elimination all food is cleansed. This is ridiculous; digestion does not clean food. What’s eliminated is waste, not clean food.

Yet another attempt to twist scripture is that whatever the New Testament says in criticism of the law, it either means the Talmud (traditions) or only the penalty of the law. Yet Gal. 4:4 says that Jesus was born under law, which would mean he was born under its penalty, which in turn would mean that he was guilty of breaking it. The fact that he never broke it refutes this claim. And if, as some may say, we’re only under the law if we break it, then Jesus could not have been born under it. This claim hopelessly contradicts scripture, not to mention the fact that being under law is a statement of obligation, which could not be sinful in itself since Jesus was under it.

All of these claims completely ignore Heb. 7:11-19, which states that the law and its priesthood stay or go together. But though some insist that Christians are antinomians (lawless), we are under the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), which is to love God and people, to show compassion and be of help. This essentially encompasses the two greatest commandments of Torah (Mat. 22:36-40)— only this and nothing more, since love fulfills the law (Rom. 13:8-10, Gal.

5:14). Here is a list of passages showing the limitation and end of the law in favor of grace:

Mat. 5:17	Jesus fulfilled law
John 1:17	law came from Moses, but grace & truth came from Jesus Christ
John 6:28-29	the work God requires is to believe in the One he sent
Acts 15:10-11	salvation is only by faith, not the burden of the law
Rom. 3:19-31	what law says is to those under it; its purpose is to expose sin, not
Rom. 3:27,4:1-5	The law we uphold is the law of faith
Rom. 6:14-15	not under law but under grace, not a license to sin
Rom. 7:1-6	we died to the law and now belong to Jesus
Rom. 8:2-3	law of sin and death is the law of Moses
Rom. 8:15,23	Christians adopted by God through faith in Jesus
Rom. 14:5-6	sacred days are a matter of personal conviction, not law
Rom. 14:10-17	kingdom not about food/drink but justice, peace
Rom. 14:19-22	don't judge personal convictions, but be considerate
Rom. 14:23	whatever is not from faith is sin
1 Cor. 9:20-21	not under the law of Moses but of Christ
1 Cor. 15:56	sting of death is sin, power of sin is THE law
2 Cor. 5:10	Bema of Christ to give/take Christians rewards
Gal. 2:9	Paul accepted by Peter, James, and John
Gal. 2:14	Paul rebuked Peter for making Gentiles observe Judaism
Gal. 2:21	righteousness by grace not law, or Jesus died for nothing
Gal. 3:19-29	law was temporary guide, didn't negate the Promise
Gal. 4:5	Christians adopted by God through faith in Jesus
Gal. 4:8-11	no need to observe sacred days, months, years

Gal. 4:21-23	heirs of promise, not law
Gal. 5:1-12	justification by law = fallen away from grace
Gal. 5:14	we have the blessings of Abraham (not Jacob/Israel)
Gal. 6:2	we are under the Law of Christ, love and compassion
Eph. 2:8-10	saved by grace, not works which are for rewards
Phil. 3:9	not our own righteousness but only in Jesus through faith
Col. 2:8	Christ, not philosophy and tradition
Col. 2:16	no judging about food, drink, festivals, moons, or sabbaths
Heb. 7:12-13	a change of priesthood requires a change of law
Heb. 8:13	the old law was fading away
Heb. 10:1	law is only shadow, not reality
Rev. 2:9, 3:9	those who say they're Jews but aren't

## The Torah became flesh?

Perhaps the most bizarre teaching associated with some Torahrists is the kabbalistic belief that the Torah is a living entity which literally became tangible in the form of Jesus. This of course makes Jesus a created being and lesser expression of God; **they reduce him to a talking book**. Thus, to follow Jesus really means to follow Torah. But extreme as this view is, all degrees of Torahrism boil down to a degrading of Jesus in some way, but above all that he only came to bring the world into Torah observance.

## Conclusion

Torahrism essentially teaches that whoever is not of the bloodline of Jacob/Israel can never be saved. But it's circular reasoning to claim that if someone comes to faith in the God of Israel it proves they were of the alleged lost tribes and just didn't know it. And then they're obligated to obey everything written in the law of Moses— well, except for the parts that require a temple, priest-

hood, and sacrifices, or to bring offerings of crops and animals, or to forgive debts and return land to original owners in Jubilee years. In addition to keeping festivals and holy days such as the Sabbath, one must also renounce the so-called pagan names of God and Jesus for whatever Hebrew words are deemed most accurate at the moment, as well as the English names for months and days.

In a nutshell, Torahism is a religion of works like any other, and it seeks to eliminate Christianity. It is both racist and fatalistic. It directly renounces salvation as a gift received by faith alone in the risen Jesus alone. Never does God tell Christians to show their love by obeying Moses. Much of the New Testament was written in refutation of what it calls Judaizers, and the apostle Paul was persecuted and eventually martyred for opposing and exposing them. We must be diligent to continue exposing this false teaching which is deceiving many who don't know the Bible well.

## The Race to be Israel

There are various groups today claiming to be true Israel and that the people of the present secular state of Israel are all fakes. Many also believe the Bible establishes one race or another as superior to the rest. This study will examine those claims.

### Analysis

First, we need to define race. It generally refers to the distinct language or physical attributes of a people group, though in times past (and in some cultures yet today) it was more specific than it is now. For example, each clan or nation was considered a race, even if the people of different races were much the same in appearance. Today it's strictly by skin color and a few main features such as the eyes, ears, or lips. Biologically and Biblically, though, these attributes are **only variations of a kind**, not different kinds. All people have melanin, which comes in two basic varieties: red/yellow or black/brown. All other variations are a matter of how much of that variety a person has; see [this article](#) and [this chart](#).

The closest thing to the modern concept of racism in the Bible would be the distinction of the genetic line of Jacob/Israel from the rest of the world. God commanded them to keep **separate**, but never to feel **superior**, which is what racism really is. But critics love to cherry-pick, and for this one the favorite proof-text is Jer. 13:23. The contextual point is the difficulty of wayward Israel to mend its ways, but the parallel between the leopard and the Ethiopian isn't condemning either of them for what they were born as. The Ethiopian has no more reason to be ashamed or considered inferior than the leopard. Since the leopard's spots aren't a sign of shame, then why should a person's skin color be a sign of shame?

In case anyone argues that the Bible always portrays white as ideal, remember Num. 12:10, where Miriam's skin turned "white as snow", meaning leprous, as punishment for challenging Moses' authority to lead Israel alone. As for Song of Solomon 1:5-6, it says right there that it refers to being tanned by having to work outside. So skin color in this case indicates poor or lowly status, not inferiority of being. Now consider these New Testament passages: Acts 10:28,34-35, 17:26, Rom. 2:11, 10:12-13, Gal. 3:28, Col. 3:11, and James 2:4,9.

As for those who claim to be the real Israelites, they would have to prove either genetic descent from the twelve tribes of Israel, or from proselytes. And it's because of those proselytes that no one can rightfully exclude any genetic group, whether Europeans or Africans or anyone else. Take a look at [this article](#).

The Bible distinguishes true from fake Israel by having the faith of Abraham (Gal. 3:7,29, Rom. 2:28-29), but "spiritual Israel" means descendants of the twelve tribes who become Christians (Rom. 9:1-11); scripture never refers to the Body of Christ as such, since the two are separate entities as explained in other studies here. So no ethnic group can claim exclusive rights to being true Israel; not whites, blacks, reds, yellows, or any shade in between. On the other hand, the Bible makes it very clear that God promised land to the nation of Israel that he did not promise to the Body of Christ.

**But who would even want to be Israel right now?** They're ripe for seven more years of God's wrath after they sign a treaty with the Antichrist, per the 70 Weeks prophecy of Dan. 9:24-27. The second half of that is described in passages such as Zechariah 14:2 and Rev. 12:6,14, and only those living in Judea who flee when they see the Abomination of Desolation will be spared, which according to Zech. 13:8-9 will be about one-third.

## Conclusion

The Bible does not condone claims of genetic superiority, and anyone claiming the promises to the nation of Israel must also accept its curses. Some try to make skin color an issue for Jesus as well, but his genetics were important only for proving his being the promised Seed or Messiah and his being born of a virgin (Gen. 3:15, Gal. 3:16). Anyone pushing the modern concept of race to the forefront has no idea what the Bible teaches about either Jews or Christians, or the incarnate Christ. To use race as a weapon or claim of superiority is real racism, and the Bible does not condone or support it.

## Did the Church Replace Israel?

The first thing to understand is that this is a 2,000-year-old debate. In fact, the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament was written around 50 or 60 AD to address the issue. It begins by explaining that Jesus is much more than any mere human or angel but God Himself. Then it points to Israel's history as a warning, after which it scolds Jewish Christians for going back under the law of Moses. There is much more of course, but it shows that this debate has a very long history, and we should be under no delusion that it will be settled anytime soon. So the goal here is simply to present the data, give a perspective, and leave the rest to the reader. We'll be focusing our study on these points:

1. Covenants
2. Law and Promise
3. The Grafting Analogy in Romans 11

#### 4. Conclusion

## Covenants

Since the identities of Israel and the church hinge on covenants, the first thing we need to do is to list and study those covenants. [Here's a chart](#) that helps to clarify and visualize the major covenants in scripture.

Now please look at the following passages: Acts 3:25, Rom. 9:4, Rom. 11:27, 2 Cor. 3:6, Gal. 3:17, Eph. 2:12, Heb. 7:22, Heb. 8:6-13. Were the two covenants with Israel and the church, or with the people of Israel only? Is the Promise the same as the covenant with Moses? With David? [Here](#) is an excellent study on the issue, which can be summarized as follows:

- Postmillennial (figurative)  
Promises of the new covenant for Israel are fulfilled in the present age via **only Israelites** who believe in Christ.
- Amillennial (figurative)  
Promises of the new covenant for Israel are fulfilled in the present age via **Israelites and Gentiles** who believe in Christ; the church has become Israel.
- Premillennial (literal)
  1. There is only one new covenant with Israel/the church; it is partially fulfilled in the present age, with ultimate fulfillment in the future millennial kingdom on earth.
  2. There are two separate new covenants, one with Israel and one with the church. (the most consistent literal conclusion)
  3. There is only one new covenant for Israel, but the church's covenant is not new.

Jer. 31:31-34 specifies these points concerning the new covenant:

1. It is to be “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”
2. It is contrasted with the Mosaic covenant, which also was with Israel only and not with any other people.
3. The covenant will be fulfilled “after those days,” i.e., after the days of judgment and affliction described in the preceding context.

4. The Law is to be written in their hearts, in their “inward parts”, in contrast to the Mosaic law which was written in tables of stone.
5. The Lord will be their God and Israel will be His people; this relationship will be mutually and publicly recognized by both parties.
6. There will be no need to proclaim the truth concerning the Lord as all will know Him, “from the least of them to the greatest of them.”
7. Their sins will be forgiven and remembered no more.

Clearly, the promises and covenants to Israel are not being fulfilled in the present age in any literal sense, so the post- and a-millennial views cannot be applied to the question at hand. Isaiah 61:8-9 is even more specific about the new covenant:

1. It is everlasting.
2. Israel’s physical progeny will be known **by the rest of the world** as blessed by God.

Further, Jer. 32:37 states that the new covenant **is conditioned upon Israel’s return from exile**, and vs. 41 states that they will be reestablished in their ancient land. Nothing at present fulfills this prophecy/promise, since Israel at present does not acknowledge God and the church has no ancient land of its own. It is more consistent with the whole premillennial position to hold that the new covenant realized today by the church is different than the new covenant with the house of Israel, than to hold that it fulfills it in part.

In Romans 11:25-27, the new covenant with the house of Israel is quoted in part and referred to the future national restoration of Israel:

I don’t want you to be ignorant of this secret, sisters and brothers, so that you won’t be congratulating yourselves: Partial callousness has come upon Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. Then finally all Israel will be saved, just as it is written: “The Rescuer will arrive out of Zion; he will turn ungodliness away from Jacob. This is my contract with them when I will take away their sins.”

There are two **new** covenants: one for Israel to be fulfilled in the millennium, and another for the church in this age (pre-mil view #2).

## Law and Promise

We must understand the distinction between [the promise to Abraham](#) (see Gen. 15:5-6) and [the law given through Moses 430 years later](#) as explained in Gal. 3-4, John 1:17, Rom. 3:21, and Rom. 6:14.

## The Grafting Analogy in Romans 11

The 11th chapter of the letter to the Romans is often interpreted as that one group of people replaced another group of people because of what Jesus did. So let's walk through the chapter and see if that holds up. We can divide the chapter into three topics: Preface, Point, and Praise.

### PREFACE vs. 1-15

Who are God's people? They're named as Israel right there in vs. 1, and vs. 2 says explicitly that God did not reject them. As stated clearly in vs. 11, God has used **his people's** sins to provide a way for Gentiles to be saved, and the purpose is to drive **Israel** to jealousy. We see in vss. 13-14 that as the apostle to the **Gentiles**, Paul's mission was to provoke **his people** to jealousy, which would be pointless if they had indeed fallen beyond recovery, which vs. 11 said is not the case. So who is provoking whom to jealousy, if the church replaced Israel? Can we replace Israel and Gentiles with Christians in that passage? Let's try it:

1-2 Then am I saying that God rejected **his people**? Absolutely not! I too am **an Israelite**, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject **his people**, whom he foreknew; ridiculous!...

11 Then am I saying that **they've** fallen and can't get up? Absolutely not! But **their** blunders meant salvation to the **non-Judeans**, for the purpose of provoking **Israel** to jealousy...

13-14 Now here is what I am saying to the **non-Judeans**, since in fact I am the Ambassador to them, and I hereby proudly dispense my

commission: I try to provoke **my people** to jealousy and so save some of them.

1-2 Then am I saying that God rejected Christians? Absolutely not! I too am a Christian, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject Christians, whom he foreknew; ridiculous!...

11 Then am I saying that Christians have fallen and can't get up? Absolutely not! But Christians' blunders meant salvation to the Christians for the purpose of provoking Christians to jealousy...

13-14 Now here is what I am saying to Christians since in fact I am the Ambassador to them, and I hereby proudly dispense my commission: I try to provoke Christians to jealousy and so save some of them.

Think carefully about substituting meanings **consistently** throughout the chapter, because we'll keep trying this as we go along. The problem is that **even if the church only replaced Israel at the cross**, then it makes mince-meat out of everything stated in this chapter **in the present tense** about this jealousy for which Paul was an ambassador.

## **POINT vs. 16-32**

This passage presents an over-arching principle, that if a part of something is holy then so is the rest of it. Then it uses an analogy of a root and branches to illustrate that principle. Pay attention to what the natural **branches** were broken off from: The **root**. Now is the root Israel, or good standing with God? Remember the earlier remarks about jealousy? What is it that people were jealous about: being part of Israel, or being in good standing with God? **This is the key of the whole controversy over Replacement Theology**. So let's try substituting in this passage, since some say that the root and natural branches represent Israel, and the wild branches represent Christians rather than Gentiles.

17-21 Now if some of the **branches** were broken off so that **you, a wild olive shoot**, could be grafted in to join with **the root** and share in its nourishment, do not gloat over **the branches**! If you do, remember that **the root** sustains **you**, not that **you** sustain **the root**. But you will object, “**Branches** were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted; but they were broken off due to unbelief, and you were grafted in for belief. So instead of gloating, be afraid! For if God did not spare **the natural branches**, he will not spare **you** either.

22-24 Now look at the kindness— and harshness— of God: harshness to **those who fell** but kindness to **you**. Persist in kindness or **you** too will be cut out. Now on the other hand, **they** will be grafted back in if they don’t persist in unbelief, and God is certainly able to do that. For if you were cut out of a **wild olive tree** and, against nature, were grafted into **the cultivated olive tree**, don’t you think that it is even better to re-graft **the natural branches** back in again?

25 I don’t want you to be ignorant of this secret, sisters and brothers, so that you won’t be congratulating yourselves: Partial callousness has come upon Israel until the full number of the **non-Judeans** has come in.

17-21 Now if some of the Israelites were broken off [from Israel] so that you, a Christian, could be grafted in to join with Israel and share in its nourishment, do not gloat over Israel. If you do, remember that Israel supports Christians, not that Christians support Israel. But you will object, “Israelites were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted; but they were broken off due to unbelief, and you were grafted in for belief. So instead of gloating, be afraid! For if God did not spare Israelites, he will not spare Christians either.

22-24 Now look at the kindness— and harshness— of God: harshness to Israel, but kindness to Christians. Persist in kindness or Christians too will be cut out. Now on the other hand, Israelites will be grafted back in if they don’t persist in unbelief, and God is certainly able to do that. For if you were cut out of Christians and, against nature, were grafted into Israel, don’t you think that it is even better to re-graft Israel back in again?

25 I don't want you to be ignorant of this secret, sisters and brothers, so that you won't be congratulating yourselves: Partial callousness has come upon Israel until the full number of Christians has come in [to Israel].

If "wild branch" is a euphemism for "Christian", then why has God been harsh with Israel but kind to Christians, who became Israel, with whom God has been harsh? Now let's try this again, with different substitutions, because there are **three** entities in the passage, not only two.

17-21 Now if some of the Israelites were broken off [from Christ] so that you, a Gentile, could be grafted in to join with Christ and share in his nourishment, do not gloat over Israel. If you do, remember that Christ supports Gentiles, not that Gentiles support Christ. But you will object, "Israelites were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted; but they were broken off due to unbelief, and you were grafted in for belief. So instead of gloating, be afraid! For if God did not spare Israelites, he will not spare Gentiles either.

22-24 Now look at the kindness— and harshness— of God: harshness to Israel, but kindness to Gentiles. Persist in kindness or Gentiles too will be cut out. Now on the other hand, Israelites will be grafted back in if they don't persist in unbelief, and God is certainly able to do that. For if you were cut out of Gentiles and, against nature, were grafted into Christ, don't you think that it is even better to re-graft Israel back in [to Christ] again?

25 I don't want you to be ignorant of this secret, sisters and brothers, so that you won't be congratulating yourselves: Partial callousness has come upon Israel until the full number of Gentiles has come in [to Christ].

The fact in this context is that the **root** is **good standing with God through Christ— not Israel, not the church, not the Gentiles**. The **natural** branches represent Israel, while the **wild** branches represent **Gentiles— not the church**. Once again: the **root** is good standing with God, and the **branches** represent **Israel** and **Gentiles**. It is those two **classes of people** whose branch-

es either stand or fall in relationship with God on the basis of faith in Jesus as Messiah.

Look again at vs. 24: This is clearly cautioning Gentile believers against feeling superior to Israelite believers. And this is why vs. 25 begins a passage assuring them that God is not finished with the people of Israel, such that Gentile believers must not despise them or think they've been replaced. God will certainly turn back to Israel after the full number of Gentiles has been brought in— to relationship with God, not what used to be Israel.

Finally in this passage, look at vss. 28-32. Are Christians enemies of Christians? Since God originally called Abraham and his descendants, including the nation of Israel, and since God's calling is **irrevocable**, then God's calling to that nation cannot be substituted. Let's try substitutions for this passage as well:

28-32 Now in regards to the Gospel **they** are in fact **your** enemies, yet at the same time **they** are the chosen people, loved because of their ancestors; the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. For just as even you were once hostile toward faith in God yet were shown mercy by means of the hostility of Israel, so also they are hostile to this mercy of **yours** so that now **they** can be shown mercy. God wraps it all up in hostility toward faith so he can be merciful to all.

28-32 Now in regards to the Gospel Israelites are in fact Israel's enemies, yet at the same time Israelites are the chosen people, loved because of their ancestors; the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. For just as even you were once hostile toward faith in God yet were shown mercy by means of the hostility of Israel, so also they are hostile to this mercy of Israel's so that now Israelites can be shown mercy. God wraps it all up in hostility toward faith so he can be merciful to all.

That's what we have to do if Christians are really Israelites, and it makes nonsense out of the passage. Now try this:

28-32 Now in regards to the Gospel Israelites are in fact Gentiles' and Christians' enemies, yet at the same time Israelites are the cho-

sen people, loved because of their ancestors; the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. For just as Gentiles were once hostile toward faith in God yet were shown mercy by means of the hostility of Israel, so also Israelites are hostile to this mercy of Gentiles so that now Israelites can be shown mercy. God wraps it all up in hostility toward faith so he can be merciful to all.

## **PRAISE vs. 33-36**

God is God and we're not, so we should praise him for his wise plan.

## **Rom. 11 Summary**

Holiness comes from the root, not the branches; branches are not grafted into each other. This chapter is talking about how both Israel and Gentiles can be reunited with God in the "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). Jesus didn't turn Gentiles into Israelites, didn't replace Israelites with Gentiles or Christians, and isn't finished with Israel. Instead, what Jesus did was to make it possible for everyone to be saved. **The divine plan was to use Israel to make Gentiles want God, and then to use Gentiles to make Israel want God.** His unfinished business with Israel will be addressed once the Body of Christ has all its members. That's what Rom. 11 is teaching.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus didn't come to put people under the law of Moses; he came to fulfill the terms of that conditional covenant (Mat. 5:17) and offer the kingdom to Israel. But they rejected their Messiah, so God's attention turned to the rest of the world, to make Israel jealous, until the number of Gentiles is reached (Rom. 11:25). During this time, those who have accepted Jesus are neither Jews nor Gentiles but the Body of Christ (Rom. 7:4, 1 Cor. 10:32,12:27, 2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 3:6).

And since Jesus is not in the priestly order of Aaron and Levi as required by the law of Moses, we have **no part in them** (Heb. 7:12). Not most, not some, **none**. The moral laws hinge on love for God and people, not the other way

around (Mat. 22:37-40), so the absence of the laws written in stone cannot mean that we stop loving God and people. And since “love does no harm” (Rom. 13:10), then we won’t be violating the law of love.

Can anyone find commands in the New Testament for us to observe the feasts or the kosher laws, or to pay tithes to priests, or to rest on a Sabbath day? No, instead we’ve seen that the only command is to love, and Rom. 14 says to let everyone follow personal convictions on things that aren’t necessary for salvation. To say that any law of Moses not specifically annulled must still be in effect, begs the question and ignores the fact that no Gentile was ever under them to begin with.

From a careful study of the entirety of scripture on the matter, we can only conclude that Christians are completely disconnected from Israel and its laws and land, and that prophecies not expressly aimed at us are to be literally and tangibly fulfilled in the nation of Israel. We are something new, unique, and unforeseen (1 Cor. 2:7, Eph. 3:6,9)— and limited. To ignore the distinctions is to misunderstand and misapply the scriptures. At the very least, no one can say this study reached its conclusions without due diligence, and these conclusions can’t be ruled out.

## Word of Faith

### *A Cross-Examination of Kenneth Hagin’s The Believer's Authority*

Those who answer before they listen are foolish and disgraceful.  
(Prov. 18:13 CEB)

The first to state his case seems right, until his opponent begins to cross-examine him. (Prov. 18:17 NET)

These Jews were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they eagerly received the message, examining the scriptures carefully every day to see if these things were so. (Acts 17:11 NET)

There is a great need for discernment in the Christian community. We either dismiss a teaching without first listening to it, just because someone we trust told us to, or we fail to compare it to the whole of scripture and “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1). When Jesus was tested in the desert by the devil (Mat. 4:1-11), the devil used snippets of scripture to try and fool him. But Jesus countered with more scripture. We must not think that if someone quotes the Bible, they must be quoting it accurately, in context, and in consideration of all the passages that apply along with it. All believers have the Holy Spirit to teach us, but we are fallible mortals, so we must work together to discern the Spirit in spite of our imperfections. The reason the Christian community is compared to a body with many parts (1 Cor. 12) is to help each other, and this includes our understanding of what the Spirit is saying. God is a perfect transmitter, but we’re imperfect receivers.

In a small group study, the book chosen to discuss was this one by Kenneth Hagin. As I read it, many other scriptures came to mind, and it became clear why I was led to this group. Per the teaching of the whole of scripture, I determined to first read the book and listen to the group, and then challenge the teaching. This writing is the content of that challenge.

While it's true that Christians typically don't realize their security in Jesus, and that as his representatives we have spiritual armor against evil (Eph. 6:10-17), it's also true that the other extreme of focusing on authority over the devil can be a slippery slope to error. So I would describe this booklet as an example of what the Bible calls "a little leaven" (1 Cor. 5:6, Gal. 5:9). There is much in it that teaches New Testament truth accurately and challenges believers to take their faith more seriously. But mixed within the truths are errors which turn our focus from Jesus to ourselves.

## **Foreward**

The question is asked at the start, "Do we have authority that we don't know about?" Why would we ask this question? What motivates the seeking of more authority? When the seventy-two disciples returned after Jesus had sent them out (Luke 10:1), he admonished them not to rejoice that the spirits were subject to them, but that their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

Certainly there is work that God intends for us to do (Eph. 2:10, 4:16, Col. 1:9-12), and Christians need reminders of this, but such work is described in the New Testament as spreading the Gospel and walking in the light (1 John 1:7, 1 Peter 2:11-12). We must remember what Jesus said about the "goats":

In that day, many will say to me, 'Our Master, didn't we prophesy in your name, and didn't we throw out demons and perform many powerful deeds in your name?' And I will have to reply, 'I never knew you; get away from me, all you lawless people!' (Mat. 7:22-23 TGNT)

These people exorcised demons and performed powerful deeds including prophesying, but Jesus didn't know them because they weren't reconciled to God. In other words, these practices were done by unbelievers! Of course believers can do these things, as shown especially in the book of Acts. But just as we can't say that only unbelievers do them, so also we can't say that believers must all do them, or that this is the mark of mature faith.

## Ch. 1 The Prayers of Paul

The first prayer is from Eph. 1:16-20. Paul gives thanks and then prays that people will have wisdom and knowledge of Jesus. He prays that we will grasp the hope of our calling and the riches of our inheritance. But he also mentions great power (*dunameos*), the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and that he holds over all the forces of evil. But does the "pouring" of this power into us mean that he no longer wields it in this life? Of course not, but this claim will appear later in the booklet.

The second prayer is from Eph. 3:14-19. Paul prays that we will be strengthened spiritually and filled with God's love. Hagin chose to read all the "we" and "us" into "me" and "I". But while it's good to understand that we are all included in "we" and "us", it's not good to elevate ourselves too highly (Rom. 12:16). He relates a time when he prayed this "me" prayer over and over for six months, until he "began to see things in the Bible I had never seen before". But did this happen because he prayed the "me" prayer, or from reading and studying scripture? Many can testify to this ability to see more and more simply by continued Bible study, but of course with acknowledging that only by

the Spirit do we grow spiritually. Rom. 12:2 tells us to "be transformed by the renewing of your minds", not by repetitively claiming power and authority.

Hagin makes this statement: "I advanced more in spiritual growth and knowledge of the Word in these six months than I had in 14 years as a minister and in more than 16 years as a Christian." Is the underlying message here that repeating a prayer of power is far superior to study? Was his spiritual growth stunted by mere study instead of claiming power? Again, Rom. 12:2 would say otherwise, and we would do well to remember Jesus' words in Mat. 6:7 about repetitions. But the statement that "this spirit of wisdom and revelation of Christ and His Word... is not going to be imparted to us through our intellect" is a direct contradiction of Rom. 12:2. Again, we must first belong to Jesus to have spiritual help, but the mind is not to be pushed aside either.

It's known that chanting can alter brain waves (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-40200-w>). But the Bible never advocates this at all, especially not as a way to improve one's faith, since it's the object of faith (Jesus) that matters, not the amount of it we may have (Mat. 17:20).

The chapter then turns to the issue of miraculous healing. The book seems to argue that praying these specific prayers over and over will make the difference and cause God to act, yet Paul himself prayed three times to be healed and the answer was "no" (2 Cor. 12:7-10). As it says in Rom. 5:3-4, 2 Cor. 1:3-4, Heb. 2:18 and others (see <https://dailyverses.net/suffering> for a list), suffering is part of our testing and makes us able to sympathize with others. Since healing is not always God's will, then to blame the victim for lack of faith is to add insult to injury. Yet Hagin says about someone he knew, "He needed healing desperately, yet he couldn't seem to grasp what the Bible teaches about divine healing."

Hagin calls this "praying scripturally". We would all agree that prayer should always be scriptural, but he seems to mean that one must pray these prayers verbatim with the person's name inserted, for ourselves and also for others who apparently lack sufficient faith. Again, the victim is blamed for lack of healing, if they've been saved for some determined length of time.

Under The Authority of the Believer, ref. Eph. 6:12, we can all agree that we have authority (not power) over the forces of evil, but simply because we belong to Jesus; that's what it means to speak in his name. We can also agree that this authority belongs to all believers, not just some. But again, as Jesus told his disciples, this isn't something to boast about (Luke 10:20), but rather to remind us that we belong to the One who holds all power and authority.

But then Hagin says a very strange thing: that salvation belongs to the sinner! Certainly Jesus paid the price to save every person that ever would live, and the offer is made to all (Rom. 10:9-15), but they are not saved (reconciled to God) without consciously accepting the gift Jesus offers (Eph. 2:8-9). Then Hagin says that we are to "go tell sinners they're reconciled to God"! No, they are not, but they can be if they accept Jesus (2 Cor. 5:18-21). This teaching, that since Jesus died for all then all are saved even if they don't know it, is essentially Universalism. It shifts away from the Biblical teaching that salvation is by faith in the risen Jesus, to the claim that people just need to be told they're saved so they can have more power or authority over the sufferings of life. This teaching is unbiblical. Hagin appeals to 2 Cor. 5:19 but ignores verse 20, or else he makes contradictions out of all the passages pleading with people to accept Jesus as Savior. In Mat. 11:20-24 Jesus didn't say to various cities that they needed to know he would reconcile them to God, but that they were condemned for their lack of faith. Likewise, in Mat. 23:13-36, Jesus didn't tell the scribes and Pharisees that they needed to know he would reconcile them, but that they would not "escape the judgment of Gehenna". 2 Thes. 1:8 says that "He will deal out a blazing fire of vengeance to those who don't know God and who do not heed the good news of our Master Jesus."

So the problem in Hagin's eyes is not that sinners need a Savior, but that sinners and believers alike just need to know "the things that belong to them". He adds that this specifically is why believers need teachers: "to tell us what's ours". Again, this is twisting scripture, not teaching it. Salvation is not at all like the \$20 Hagin forgot he had which did him no good till he knew he had it; rather, it's like being flat broke and asking Jesus for the \$20 he's been offering to us all this time. Likewise with the example of the man who died of starvation though he was rich; the problem was not that he just failed to use the money, but that he was too greedy to spend it even to save his own life.

The reason many aren't saved is because they're too proud to humble themselves before God and accept the gift of salvation only found in Jesus. We won't see them in heaven unless they do.

## **Ch. 2 What Is Authority?**

This chapter is mostly an account of a dream, where Hagin commands lions to stop attacking him. Because he commanded, his physical heart symptoms disappeared. What's the lesson here? Again, it seems to be all about me. Instead of asking Jesus "If you want to, you can heal me" (Mat. 26:39, Luke 22:42, John 4:46-50 1 Cor. 1:31, 4:7, 2 Cor. 12:9, James 4:15), it's "I must command the devil to leave and I will be healed. I stood my ground; I won." These statements in the book are intertwined with scriptural principles such as remembering that the power is of God, not of ourselves. Yet who gets the glory and credit when we "stand our ground" and "win"? Rather, we should say, "Jesus, glory to you for healing me!" Our faith must be in Jesus, not in our faith.

The chapter ends with a brief claim about prophecy, allegedly quoting the Holy Spirit, though the quote does not appear in scripture. Instead of messages from God to people, prophecy here is redefined as the exercising of authority so that "in this life ye shall reign by Christ Jesus". Indeed, we will all reign on the earth with Jesus in eternity (Rev. 22:5), but the spiritual gift of prophecy here and now is not a position of authority or power, but a means of "building up the church" (1 Cor. 14:1-3).

## **Ch. 3 Seated With Christ**

Citing Mat. 28:18, the claim is made that when Jesus said all authority in heaven and earth had been given to him, it meant given to us/me, based on the analogy that the head and body are interdependent (Eph. 4:16, Col. 2:19). Interdependent though they are in this age, the head and body are not interchangeable. The analogy in scripture in its context is to show that believers are Jesus' hands and feet in this world, the vessels through whom God chooses to work in this age of grace, but not that everything applying to the head must also apply to the body in every respect.

The same error in reasoning is given regarding us being seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Eph. 2:6). Certainly there is great honor in this, but it's in the context of the grace of God in saving us by faith in the Jesus who rose from the dead. There is nothing in that passage about us wielding authority here on earth.

We can all agree that God's power was displayed for all to see when Jesus rose from the dead, but in the section *The Source of Our Authority*, Hagin claims that "You will never understand the authority of the believer only with your intellect... you must believe it by faith." By definition, every believer has already believed the power of God by faith, but "the authority of the believer" can be accepted without full understanding of how God accomplishes this. We could say that nobody really "understands" it.

After accurately describing our identification with Jesus in his resurrection, Hagin then claims that Eph. 2:5-6 is talking about conferred authority. But verse 7 gives the real interpretation: "so that he could show in the coming ages the overwhelming riches of his favor— his kindness to us who are united with him" (TGNT). Our being seated with Jesus does not make us Jesus. Despite the repeated charge that churches don't know we were raised up with Christ, no supporting evidence is given for the claim.

The other passage about the head/body analogy is 1 Cor. 12:12-14,17, followed in the book by 2 Cor. 6:14-15 about not being in partnership with unbelievers. Recalling the statements in ch. 1 about unbelievers being already reconciled, one wonders how this can be read with any honesty. If everyone is reconciled, why does scripture command us not to partner with some of them? This is not addressed in the book.

Under *Seated With Christ*, Hagin states that "we've preached a 'cross' religion, and we need to preach a 'throne' religion." But it's scripture itself that preaches a 'cross' religion, for without the cross, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22), and "the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18 NET). In 1 Cor. 2:2 Paul says, "For I decided to be concerned about nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him

crucified.” Yes, that’s the Gospel we preach to unbelievers, but there is no instance in the Letters where believers are told they need to learn more about being on God’s throne.

Hagin seems to belittle the Christian who stays at the cross. Certainly we should all grow spiritually, but the fruit of the Spirit is not “knowledge of authority” but “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Hagin’s teaching paints the cross-centered believer as immature and undeveloped, but those head/body passages teach that no part is superior to another part, and those parts that seem less important (enlightened? evolved?) are to be treated with special honor, not contempt.

But perhaps the most blatantly blasphemous statement in the book thus far is this: “The cross is actually a place of defeat, whereas the Resurrection is a place of triumph.” Isn’t this the meaning of 1 Cor. 1:18, which says that the message of the cross is folly to those who are perishing? According to Gal. 6:14 we are to boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Col. 2:15 says Jesus publicly disgraced the rulers and authorities when he triumphed over them by the cross. The cross is where Jesus shed his blood and sealed Satan’s doom; who then would want to leave the cross behind?

It would be enough at this point to dismiss the book outright, because enough evidence has been presented that there is entirely too much “leaven” in this “lump of dough”. But we must continue, especially in light of such arrogant claims as, “Some of us have exercised a little more authority... because we have a little more spiritual comprehension.” Again, the one who leaves the cross behind and “wins” is portrayed as more spiritually advanced, a more “important” part in the Body of Christ. What does the Bible say about those who have fragile faith? Accept them, and don’t think poorly of them (Rom. 14:1). Continuing in verse ten, we read:

So why do you judge your brother or sister? Why do you look down on them? All of us will someday stand before the judgment seat of Christ, for it is written: “ ‘As I live,’ says the Master, ‘Every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will acknowledge God!’” Since each one of us will give an account of

ourselves to God, in no way should we be judging each other's personal convictions. Be resolved not to put any stumbling block or trap in front of a sister or brother. (TGNT)

Under *Maintaining Balance*, at least we see a nod to the need not to take things to extremes, but by practice thus far, the book does exactly that. Pushing aside the cross is extreme, and the attitude, "Let me help you up to my level of faith and authority" is condescending.

## **Ch. 4 Breaking the Power of the Devil**

Hagin begins by saying we need to "reign over" the principalities and powers of Eph. 6:12. But resisting the devil (James 4:7) is not the same as reigning over him. Then under *Adam's Treason* he says that Adam was "the god of this world". Though both Adam and Eve had dominion, to use the phrase from 2 Cor. 4:4 describing the devil seems forced, since scripture never uses that term for Adam or Eve. We can agree that they did hand over dominion to the devil by their sin, and that Jesus is called the last Adam since he was, as promised in Gen. 3:15, the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head.

Under *Authority Now*, he cites Luke 10:19 stating that "nothing shall harm you"—which is just before Jesus said not to rejoice in power over demons! But then, in violation of James 4:13-16, he dismisses the humble approach which asks God to heal and protect. Praying for God to act is not lazy or merely "asking someone else, including God, to do something" about our problems; it's what scripture tells us to do. God does indeed expect us to pray, to act as we're able, and to seek out the Spirit's guidance, but God's will isn't hindered by us; nothing can tie God's hands. When we say "I break the power... I claim salvation", we take the credit, and we ignore the examples in scripture where the disciples glorified Jesus instead (see Acts 3:6,12, where Peter explicitly states that the healing was not "by our own power"). The underlying message, once again, is that the sick aren't healed and the lost (reconciled?) aren't saved because we don't take authority, meaning we carry the blame.

Under *How to Deal With the Devil*, Hagin again dismisses “the arena of reason”, though 1 Cor. 14:15 says “I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind”, and verse 19 says “in the church I want to speak five words with my mind to instruct others, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.” Many false religions also dismiss the mind and see it as an obstacle to spiritual enlightenment. If we’re going to be balanced and avoid extremes, then let us practice that here by not neglecting or demonizing the mind, any more than we should do so with the spirit. And the irony of using words and arguments to convince us of our need to dismiss the mind has escaped Mr. Hagin. How does one study the Bible without the mind? See also 2 Tim. 2:15.

But then Hagin claims that the word in John 14:13-14 means demand rather than ask. But as can be seen in any interlinear, like most words it has a range of meanings: ask, request, petition, or demand. Can anyone think we actually demand things from God? No, especially since inserting that meaning here would make Jesus our helpless slave. So for Hagin to only give the last meaning in the range is not just in disregard for the context, but also disingenuous and misleading.

Under *Faith’s Role in Authority*, Hagin speaks of being a pastor before being “baptized in the Holy Spirit”. Yet the Bible describes our very salvation in such terms. John the Baptist of all people contrasted water baptism with the “Holy Spirit and fire” baptism of Jesus (Mat. 3:11). The scriptures do mention times of “being filled with the Spirit”, which in the contexts indicates a special, temporary empowerment, but there is no Spirit baptism besides the one we receive at the moment of salvation. Never is this phrase used to describe the sign gifts such as “speaking in tongues”.

## **Ch. 5 Exercising Authority**

This chapter focuses on Eph. 1:20 and 2:6, which state that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father in heaven and that we have been raised together with him. This is also stated in Col. 3:1, which defines what it means to focus on “things above” in verses 5 through 10: Renounce sinful passions and actions. Nothing is said there about authority. Rev. 3:21 directly states that we will sit with Jesus on his throne, but again, nothing is said about this beyond the un-

derstood honor of being there. Our reign with Christ is set for eternity, not here and now, since this verse speaks of the future rather than the present. Hagin even admits that being seated means at least that “certain aspects” (where is this specified?) “of his work are suspended.” If Jesus’ works are suspended, and we’re sitting with him, then so also must our “certain works” be suspended.

After once again dismissing the mind, Hagin mentions “the mind of God”, and we should note that 1 Cor. 2:16 says that we believers have “the mind of Christ”. Then he states accurately that Jesus has been given all authority, but adds his own words: “we may exercise it”. But he more clearly violates scripture by claiming that God “can’t get along without” me or us. Yes, God certainly can get along without anyone at all. Acts 17:24-25 says this:

The God who made the world and all it contains is the Master of heaven and earth. So he doesn’t live in temples made by human hands and doesn’t need their help. The One who gives life and breath to all has no need of anything. (TGNT)

We are indeed his hands and feet in this world, but by his choice, not his inability. Remember that Jesus said God could raise children for Abraham from rocks if he so chose (Mat. 3:9). Can anyone justify saying that the clay can control or restrict the potter? (Isaiah 29:16) Hagin has repeated his misunderstanding of the Bible’s head/body metaphor. Likewise with Eph. 6:12 again, regarding our “wrestling against principalities”. If we consider context as he recommends, we see that this is about being able to stand/defend against the devil’s attacks (verse 11) and standing firm (verse 13). Nothing in the analogy in this passage speaks of taking authority over evil, but defending against its attacks.

Under The Demon Jesus Refused to Deal With, Hagin claims to have had yet another personal audience with Jesus. In a spiritual or visionary sense, no one in the New Testament besides Paul and John claimed such things. Be very wary of anyone like this (Gal. 1:8), and understand that it’s another example of elevating some believers as more advanced or spiritual than others, since the vast majority of mature, faithful followers of Jesus do not have such expe-

riences. Never does scripture gauge anyone's spirituality in this way, or even by whether they have been given the "sign" gifts (tongues, healing, prophecy).

Then the Jesus of Hagin's alleged vision told him, "If you hadn't done something about that (the demon), I couldn't have." This is not the Jesus of the Bible, who holds all authority and power, as Hagin himself has emphasized so many times thus far. Hagin's Jesus lacked ability, not will. But Hagin intends to supply four scriptures proving me wrong in the next section.

Under *Dealing With the Devil*, Hagin first claims that the Bible never tells us to ask God to "do anything against the devil", but Rom. 16:20 says, "may the God of peace quickly crush Satan under your feet" (TGNT). In 2 Cor. 12:8 Paul begged the Lord to take away the Satanic thorn in his flesh. But the Lord told him that this was necessary to keep Paul humble, not that Paul needed to take authority over his thorn. According to Hagin, this must mean Paul was not as spiritually advanced as he. In addition, Rev. 12:10 states that our Accuser is always accusing us before God, but it's Jesus, not us, who defends, according to 1 John 2:1. And Luke 1:37 says that nothing is impossible with God.

Now to the four scriptures. The first is Mat. 28:18, which as we've already noted, is about the authority of Jesus, not of us. But Hagin adds to Jesus' words, "I immediately delegated my authority on earth to the Church." (Side note: It's almost always in visions of Mary that I've seen Church capitalized.) Not only did Jesus not say this, but also delegation does not mean the one delegating has lost any authority or ability. And again he misapplies the head/body analogy to make the head almost subservient and obedient to the body.

The second scripture is Mark 16:15-18 about "signs that follow them that believe". First of all, be aware that Mark 16:9-19 is known by competent Bible scholars to be unauthentic.\* Even if we disregard that, not one example exists in the New Testament for believers being told they can safely drink poison or handle snakes. It's never wise to build a theology on one "witness", especially a disputed one. We could also include the anecdotal fact that many who take this as inspired fact have died, in spite of their faith. The exception proves (tests) the rule.

Regarding Col. 1:13, darkness not having authority over us does not mean that we have authority over darkness. If we really have this authority, then why haven't these vaunted mature believers driven out all darkness? Would the blame be shifted to the need for all believers to mature at once? We could ask the same question about the gift of healing. Surely there are enough mature believers to empty all the hospitals, at least the ones for children, who according to the next section, are the only ones we can help.

Under Exercising Authority Over Others, the authority that Hagin has so diligently promoted is now found to be restricted— by other people no less, not Jesus. Yet there is no consistency between having authority over supernatural beings but none over mortals besides ourselves. And how can any of us cast out a demon from another person, if by Hagin's analogy we have no authority in someone else's "house"?

The third scripture is James 4:7, about resisting the devil. That it says the devil will flee "from you" hardly means "not from Jesus" as Hagin claims; that's what in logic is called a non sequitur fallacy (the conclusion doesn't follow from the premises). Hagin goes on to emphasize the terror of devils when we stand against them, but seems to imply that it's us they're afraid of, when in fact it's only Jesus they're afraid of. As Hagin himself has argued, we have delegated authority, not power. And what about James 4:13-17, which commands us to be humble and say, "If the Lord wills, we will do this or that"?

The fourth scripture is 1 Peter 5:8, which is about standing, not commanding. (Regarding "the faith" or "your faith", the Greek has "the".) To be vigilant does not mean nothing bad will happen to us. Not every answer to prayer is 'yes', as we can see regarding the thorn in Paul's flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-10). So while we can agree that every believer can, with God's power, "do something about the devil" (vague, what is "do something"?), these four scriptures don't support the claim being made.

Under Standing for Baby Christians, Hagin teaches accurately that Christians are expected to grow spiritually. 1 Cor. 2:6 speaks of us using wisdom among the mature, and Heb. 5:14 defines spiritual maturity as a developed sense of discernment. Gal. 5:22-26 defines "the fruit of the Spirit" in terms of our

character and purity, as opposed to things like arrogance and impurity. So it follows that a baby/immature believer is one who has not yet exhibited these characteristics. Nothing is said in these passages about taking or wielding authority, but about the kind of people we become.

In his account of believers without the gift of healing, it seems that Hagin has forgotten that the Spirit chooses different gifts for different people. In the passages about spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12 and 14), we see that gifts such as healing and tongues are not given to everyone (1 Cor. 12:29-30). We cannot claim or demand or presume that we all have any particular gift, nor judge another believer's spiritual maturity by the lack of certain gifts, which becomes victim blaming when it comes to lack of healing. The gifts are just that; they are given, not earned, and not even inherited spiritually.

We should also be aware that signs are for unbelievers, while prophecy/teaching is for believers (1 Cor. 14:22). The reason many new or immature believers may have experienced sign gifts is the same reason these gifts were so prevalent in the early church: God uses these extraordinary signs to indicate something new and profound. How many times have the Pentecostal tongues of fire descended upon the whole believing community at once? How many times has the entire Body of Christ spoken in languages they never learned? How many incidents were there of God speaking to someone through a burning bush? The precedent is clear: Signs are for special situations, not the norm.

Under Authority on the Earth, Hagin claims that Jesus told him, "If you don't do anything about it, nothing will be done." But 2 Tim. 2:13 says "if we are not faithful he remains faithful, because he cannot renounce himself." In Luke 19:40 Jesus said, "if these people are silent, the stones themselves will shout!" Regardless of how many times Hagin repeats this claim, scripture refutes it. We cannot hobble God.

But when Hagin takes Eph. 1:22-23 as that we are Jesus' body so we must be the feet in that verse, he twists the scripture. The context clearly indicates that Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth, without restriction. To say as he does that "feet aren't members of the head" is to decapitate the body and

make the head not part of it at all! This is an example of how to misuse an analogy, because analogies are never meant to be universally applied in all contexts.

Then Hagin takes Luke 10:19 out of the context of a specific group of apostles to apply to all believers of all time. Do all believers go out two by two, continually travel and expect free lodging wherever they go, and never suffer any harm? Of course not. So while we can agree that we should stand against the devil rather than run away in fear, we cannot agree that we should expect no harm in this life; in fact, Jesus promised it to all his followers (John 16:33). What we're promised here and now is peace from our security in Christ, not exemption from suffering. The true test of faith is to keep it strong even in the midst of suffering, and as stated in ch. 1, to sympathize with others in their suffering.

Under Reigning as Kings, Hagin misinterprets Rom. 5:17 as that the reign of life through Jesus means we are already reigning as kings here on earth. Scripture puts this in the future in Rev. 11: 15, 12:10 ("the kingdom of the world now belongs... now the kingdom has arrived"). And what of the statements about the Holy Spirit as a "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" (2 Cor. 5:5, Eph. 1:14)? A deposit is a guarantee of a future delivery of goods, which in this context is the full inheritance due us by faith alone. Something due in the future is not in our possession at present. We are guaranteed many things, reigning in God's kingdom being one, but we are not yet reigning. In 1 Peter 1:4 we're told that our inheritance is reserved in heaven for us, but one does not hold something in reserve if they already use it.

Regarding Hagin's analogy of the baby bird with its eyes shut and mouth open, scripture says we should be "innocent as doves" (Mat. 10:16) and "crave the pure milk through which we may grow" (1 Peter 2:2). Jesus also told us that we shouldn't worry, since even the birds of the field have their needs met (Mat. 6:26). Certainly we aren't supposed to be gullible, as we've already seen what scripture tells us about the need for discernment. But this has nothing at all to do with reigning as kings.

Under Humility vs. Poverty, we can agree that they're not the same thing. But when Hagin says that "the donkey was the Cadillac of that day", he speaks in ignorance. The donkey indicated humility (Zech. 9:9), in contrast to the white steed rode by conquerors (Rev. 19:11). Context is everything, and though the donkey was also used by the wealthy, scripture has already shown us the difference between the sacrificial Lamb and the conquering King.

So what point is Hagin making here? That believers only ever suffer poverty because of a lack of faith? If so, we would point to Heb. 11:35-40, where righteous people of great faith suffered hardship in this life, sometimes to the point of death. Jesus himself had no place to lay his head (Mat. 8:20), and he told us to carry crosses, not drive Cadillacs (Luke 14:27). After all, the love of money is a root of much evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Heb. 13:5 and Phil. 4:11-13 tell us to be content with what we have, and Jesus said to sell what we have and give it to the poor (Mark 10:21). How can we give away our wealth and still drive that Cadillac or fly that private jet? Rather, "godliness combined with contentment brings great profit." (1 Tim. 6:6)

Under Exercising Authority in Your Family, again we see the claim that every sickness or accident or lack of wealth is directly attributed to the devil, and that the mature believer will not suffer such things in their own family. Regarding the anecdotal account of the brother with his back in a cast, why wasn't he completely healed? And how does this differ from the fervent prayers of so many Christians over the years who have not focused on their personal authority? Does Hagin believe God's answer to prayer must always be 'yes' or 'right now'?

Certainly there are things that can happen to us as a result of sin, disbelief, or the attacks of the devil. But that's the point: It's not always directly from the devil (beyond the general curse on nature and our mortality). Otherwise we make nonsense out of passage like James 5:14-16. Speaking of James, that chapter begins with a rebuke of the rich.

As for the repeated claim that there's a certain (undefined) point at which we can't help others, scripture says that we must bear with the failings of the weak (Rom. 15:1) and not look down on them (Rom. 14:1).

Under Learn to Be Exalted, we must ask why we need to learn something that we already believe about our Savior, whose righteousness (not our own) saves us (Isaiah 53:5, Phil. 3:9). Then Hagin advises reversing the words of Eph. 1:22 to “head to the church over all things”. But this won’t help him in the original Greek, for which word order is only used for emphasis. It’s better to take the verse as stated, including 23:

God put all of them beneath his feet, and he alone is the one given by God as the head of the Congregation, which is his body, bringing everything to completion.

The fact remains that Jesus isn’t limited by his Body. Yes we should pray for victory over the devil; yes we should be at peace in him. But over-emphasizing authority leads to pride and judgmentalism.

\*Mark 16:9-19 In *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Bruce Metzger writes: “Clement of Alexandria and Origen [early third century] show no knowledge of the existence of these verses; furthermore Eusebius and Jerome attest that the passage was absent from almost all Greek copies of Mark known to them.” See also Sharper Iron.

## **Ch. 6 Risen With Christ**

This chapter focuses on Col. 1:15-20, which is about the supremacy of Christ. But the claim is made that we are enlivened or quickened “at the same time as Christ”. The Greek word doesn’t convey any sense of time, but simply the fact of being joined.

Under *The Keys of Authority* it accurately states that Jesus possesses the keys of death and the grave. But though the person who claimed we’d live forever in the flesh was wrong, it’s just as wrong for Hagin to call him “stupid”. Disagreement isn’t always a case of one person being stupid, deluded, or more flawed.

Again, Hagin fallaciously insists that Jesus has no ability to act in this world without us. But what about the “binding and loosing” of Mat. 18:18? Citing noted commentator Dr. Constable,

This verse is identical to Matthew 16:19. There Jesus was talking specifically about the messianic kingdom. Here He was speaking more generally about how His disciples should conduct themselves in humility. The "whatever" again seems to include people and privileges in view of how the Old Testament describes the stewards' use of keys. The disciples would determine God's will in a particular instance of rendering judgment in the church. Hopefully they would consult the Scriptures and pray to do this. Then they would announce their decision. With their announcement they would give or withhold whatever the judgment might involve, but they would really be announcing what God, the divine authority, had already decided. Their decision would be God's will for the person being disciplined, assuming they had obtained the will of God before announcing it. [Note: See Craig S. Keener, "Exegetical Insight," in William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, p. 115.]

But Hagin would have this be about authority in any and every situation, here and now instead of the future Messianic kingdom. God does indeed wait patiently for us, but we've already established that he is not helpless. When Jesus showed his disciples how to pray (Mat. 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4), he asked the Father that his will, not ours, be done on earth, just as in heaven. Jesus never said that he needed us to do it. For Hagin to claim that Jesus said (again with the Marian apparition capitalization of pronouns) “I'll do whatever you tell Me to do”, is the height of scripture twisting and even blasphemy. Jesus prayed to the Father in the garden, “Not my will, but yours” (Mat. 26:39), and he is our example of how we should relate to God.

Neither has the Lord been “hindered in his plans because his Body has failed to appreciate the meaning of Christ's exultation”. Is anything too difficult for God (Jer. 32:27)? Of course not. We have free will, but like a master chess player, God will “win the game” because of superior intellect, not force. He says in Isaiah 46:9,

Remember this and take courage; take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the prior things—from long ago; I am God, and there's no other. I am God! There's none like me, who tells the end at the beginning, from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My plan will stand; all that I decide I will do"

There is just no other way to describe Hagin's twisting of scripture than lying. We should indeed "stay with the Word", but that's not what he actually does.

## **Ch. 7 The Weapons of Our Warfare**

The primary scripture for this chapter is Eph. 6:10-17, about spiritual armor. While it's true that anyone saying spiritual armor won't work is making God a liar, so also it's true that saying Jesus can't do anything unless we allow him makes God a liar. Jesus' rebuke about splinters and planks comes to mind (Mat. 7:3).

Under How to Remain Undefeated, the various pieces of armor described by Paul are examined. But all the pieces except the sword (the Word of God, not of us) are defensive. And we might ask Mr. Hagin why this Body has a head, if the feet in 1 Cor. 15:27 etc. can only belong to the Body.

So we have many pieces of defensive armor, but only one weapon, and it's not our awareness of authority.

## **Ch. 8 Authority Over Demon Spirits, Not Human Wills**

This chapter's title reminds us to ask: How can it be that we have authority to tell Jesus what he can do, or demons what to do, but not other people? And there is no support given in the book for the claim that someone can have a demon without being possessed by a demon. We can agree that supernatural beings have more knowledge than we have, but again there's no support for the claim that they can know our thoughts. The point is well-taken that this knowledge can be used to fool people and even make predictions, but this should serve as a caution once again regarding the sign gifts.

But when Hagin said that he couldn't cast out a demon in someone else, he promotes a dangerous teaching. How could Jesus or the apostles cast demons out of people, as shown throughout the Gospels and Acts? Not once do they ask permission to cast them out, and even if the man in Hagin's anecdote gave it, by his teachings he still shouldn't have been able. This takes actual authority away from the believer. Hagin has made human will the ultimate authority on earth.

Under Religious Spirits, he claims that there is such a thing as a "religious spirit" demonic entity, though scripture never says this. It does say that some have a false appearance of religion (2 Tim. 3:5), but not that it's caused by demons. No scripture is offered to support the claim— because none exist.

Under Free Will Prevails, we can agree that free will is essential to our being responsible for deciding whether or not to accept Jesus or commit sin, and that we can't become control freaks to others (Mat. 20:26). But again, demons have no choice but to leave when commanded in Jesus' name, and the victims don't have to give permission. No scriptural support has been offered to say otherwise, and the one making the claim bears the burden of proof.

Then Hagin claims that Jesus told him that the reason the demon-possessed girl in Acts 16:18 wasn't immediately healed was because Paul "had to wait until the Spirit of God gave him discerning of spirits." This is another instance of claims without scriptural support. Anyone can say Jesus told them things, and many do, but like the Bereans of Acts 17:11, we must search the scriptures to see if the claims are true. Hagin said this himself earlier in the book, but it must be applied to him as to anyone else. He also says that he "didn't have the discerning of spirits operating" at the time, which seems to mean he thinks spiritual gifts come and go, but none of the passages about the gifts even hint at this idea.

As for his teaching that one must "seek an audible voice" (that God won't do so without your invitation), we might ask whether he gave Jesus invitations to give him all those visions and teachings that read between the lines of scripture. Then he claims that he has power over other people's ailments while they're in his vicinity. This contradicts his earlier analogy of having no au-

thority over other people's children. Would that change if the children were near him? Who gets the glory for miracles that only happen when he is nearby?

Under *Breaking the Devil's Power*, we would ask why Hagin would ever have authority over his older brother, in proximity or not.

Under *Why People Lose Their Healing*, how does Hagin explain "mass healing" if we cannot help or control others? If it's the arbitrary "proximity rule", then this negates the "can't help others" rule. He then blames the victims by saying, "Why did people lose it (their healing)? Because they didn't know their authority." Are we to say that the apostle Paul and the persecuted Christians in Heb. 11 didn't know their authority? Why did Paul tell Timothy to drink some wine for his bladder problem (1 Tim. 5:23) instead of healing him, was he too far away? (If Paul could use sarcasm, so can we!) And healing that can come and go isn't healing, it's remission and relapse. Healing done by faith in the Healer is permanent. As for casting out demons, did the woman he mentions ask for help or give permission? He doesn't say.

Under *Oppression vs. Possession*, which we've already discussed, we can only agree that oppression is external. The one "having" a demon is possessed, while oppression is in the form of circumstances. Hagin attempts to hedge on this by saying that our body is merely a "house" and as such can have demons just as a house can have termites, since the house isn't the person. But bodies are what demons possess!

Under *How to Deal With Demons*, we can agree that we need both Word and Spirit, as has already been stated. But if we're to go mostly by anecdotal evidence (the bulk of the book), I can testify that many who are unaware of all this "authority" also hear from the Spirit and are told things they couldn't possibly know otherwise. And again, we can't claim to have authority and then excuse lack of results by either lack of proximity/domain on our part, or lack of knowledge of authority on others' parts. Excuses are given by tricksters.

Hagin goes on to claim that he can control other people's fear as long as they're within the undefined proximity, but only if they "didn't know how to

stand against it”. Such claims require evidence, meaning examination by people who aren’t biased one way or the other. Yet there’s no way to examine someone’s fear, which they can hide or lie about, or be too intimidated at the moment to think clearly. Any stage magician could duplicate these claims.

Finally, under Resist the Devil, once again Hagin makes up restrictions on when and where demons can be cast out. Resisting the devil concerns temptation to sin, and of course that’s something only each of us can do for ourselves, though we certainly can pray for others and encourage them to renounce sin. But everything should be done with prayer to the One who has the power to answer and act. He is the vine, and we can accomplish nothing without him (John 15:5)— not that he can accomplish nothing without us.

## Conclusion

This cross-examination of Hagin’s book has been done in obedience to scriptural commands to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1) and “weigh what is said” (1 Cor. 14:29). Just as it would have been easier to dismiss the book without having read it, so also it would be easier for those reading this examination to attribute it to immaturity, fear, or a host of other alleged faults. But we each stand before Christ as the judge of souls, not each other (Rom. 14:4, 2 Cor. 5:10).

Do people get results from the teachings of this book? If we consider only anecdotal evidence, it would seem so. But as we can see in the judgment of the sheep and goats, unbelievers can also get results (and we might ask what an unbeliever is, if everyone is already reconciled). The magicians in Pharaoh’s court could mimic some of the same miracles as performed by Moses (Ex. 7:10-13, 20-24, 8:5-7), because Satan can also perform signs and wonders (Mat. 24:24, 2 Cor. 11:14).

This is why we must always study the scriptures, test the spirits, and walk in humble gratitude, rather than seek out control, authority, or power. To rest in Jesus is exactly that; not to be lazy and unproductive, but to realize that the works we do are out of love and care for lost souls, and to grow by “the renewing of your minds”.

## Eastern Orthodoxy

One of the hallmarks of false teaching is specialized definitions for many words. We can think of many religious teachings that fit this description, but this study will focus on one which is very subtle and seems to be growing in influence within the Christian community: [Eastern Orthodoxy](#). First, quotations of significance from that source.

### Teachings of Eastern Orthodoxy

In discussing God's relationship to his creation, Orthodoxy used the concept of a distinction between God's eternal essence which is totally transcendent and his uncreated energies which is how he reaches us. It is also necessary to understand that this is an artificial distinction, not a real one. The God who is transcendent and the God who touches us are one and the same.

By his participation in human life, death, and resurrection [Christ] sanctified the means whereby we could be restored to our original purity and regain our right relationship with the Father. This is what the Orthodox call salvation from consequences of the sickness of sin. Christ's salvific act worked retroactively back to the beginning of time thus saving all the righteous people from the bonds of sin, including Adam and Eve.

The Bible is always interpreted within the context of Holy Tradition, which gave birth to it and canonized it. Orthodox Christians maintain that belief in a doctrine of *sola scriptura* would be to take the Bible out of the world in which it arose. Orthodox Christians therefore believe that the only way to understand the Bible correctly is within the Orthodox Church.

Though [a dead person's soul] may linger for a short period on Earth, it is ultimately escorted either to heaven or hell, following the Temporary Judgment (Orthodox do not believe in Purgatory). ...The Orthodox believe that the state of the soul in Hades can be changed by the love and prayers of the righteous up until the Last Judgment. For this reason the church offers special prayer for

the dead on the third day, ninth day, fortieth day, and the one-year anniversary after the death of an Orthodox Christian.

The Orthodox believe that after the Final Judgment:

- all souls will be reunited with their resurrected bodies
- all souls will fully experience their spiritual state
- having been perfected, mankind will forever progress towards a deeper and fuller love of God, which equates with eternal happiness
- hell, though often described in metaphor as punishment, is not so much inflicted by God as the soul's inability to participate in God's infinite love which is given freely and abundantly to everyone

According to Orthodox theology, the purpose of the Christian life is to attain *theosis*, the mystical union of man with God. This union is understood as both collective and individual. St. Athanasius of Alexandria, wrote concerning the Incarnation that, "He (Jesus) was made man **that we might be made god**". See 2 Peter 1:4, John 10:34–36, Psalm 82:6. The entire life of the church is oriented towards making this possible and facilitating it.

[Water] Baptism is the mystery which transforms the old sinful man into the new, pure man; the old life, the sins, any mistakes made are gone and a clean slate is given. Through baptism one is united to the Body of Christ by becoming a member of the Orthodox Church.

Chrismation (sometimes called confirmation) is the mystery by which a baptized person is granted the gift of the Holy Spirit through anointing with Holy Chrism. It is normally given immediately after baptism as part of the same service, but is also used to receive lapsed members of the Orthodox Church.

Sin is not viewed by the Orthodox as a stain on the soul that needs to be wiped out, or a legal transgression that must be set right by a punitive sentence, but rather as a mistake made by the individual with the opportunity for spiritual growth and development.

Now some quotes from [Union With God](#):

Instead of asking why God allows so much suffering on Earth, we should ask ourselves why *we* allow it!.

Paul says we are like mirrors that not only reflect God's brightness, but which are transformed into the light which they reflect(2 Cor. 3:17-18).

Matthew Fox, an Episcopal priest known for his many works on Christian mysticism, agrees. The final section of his masterwork, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, is titled "A Vision of the Second Coming," and considers the coming of the Kingdom of God to be the work of God's children acting in their divinization, restoring the Earth and rebuilding all human institutions to eliminate hunger, hopelessness, and violence.

I have come to believe that God has also entrusted us with far more of the responsibility of saving the world than we might commonly suppose.

*Theosis* is one more reason why I believe the "emergency airlift" idea of "the Rapture" is completely mistaken.

Some points of clarification: deification does not mean that we will only have a divine nature, but that like Christ, we will be one, with God, both human and divine.

Thomas Aquinas described it like a poker being held in a fire. The poker becomes a fire, in that it takes every attribute of the fire. It burns, radiates heat and light, emits energy as it is transformed by the fire's energy. And yet, it though it has "become fire," it is unquestionably iron as well.

I believe there is a largely unexplored potential for inter-religious cooperation and understanding at the deep, universal level of this quest for mystical union with the Absolute. In Hinduism, this transforming union is called in Self-realization or liberation; in Islam, it's *fana*; in Buddhism it's enlightenment, and in all traditions, it's awakening.

Many great teachers on the mystical path have seen the value of learning from the common strands in their own faith and other faiths; for instance, Thomas Merton, John Main, Laurence Freeman, and Bede Griffiths are but a few of many Catholic priests who have learned much from Eastern spirituality, and the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, the world's two most prominent Buddhist writers, frequently refer to the teachings of Jesus.

Finally, quotes from another site on [theosis](#):

The doctrine of theosis puts the trinity in a new light. Many modern thinkers tell us that 3 is an incomplete number. Carl Jung, and some others have proposed adding Mary and making it a quaternity.

For Protestants theosis leads to the idea that the 4th member of the godhead might be humanity.

## Responses to Eastern Orthodoxy

The reader will have already noticed a subtle progression from the vaguely acceptable to the outright unbiblical. This is true of many religions; they all sound the same until you pin them down on specifics.

### First Quote

We see in the first paragraph some terminology which is unfamiliar to those who get their theology directly from scripture, since such terms cannot be found there. The article attempts to distinguish between something called God's "eternal essence" and his "uncreated energies". While pointing out that this distinction is "artificial", the writer nonetheless thought it important to say. On its own this artificial construct seems unnecessary, but we will see as we go along why they make it. It has more to do with making sense of other beliefs than in explaining something about God that scripture alone would not tell us.

In the second paragraph we see agreement with scripture in that Christ came to restore our broken relationship with God. But sin is not a "sickness", it is

rebellion against the will of God which makes us legally condemned. John 3:18 says, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” Romans 3:25 says, “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood, to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.”

There are many references to sin in the New Testament, and a spot check will reveal that sin is not something to be *healed* but something to be *forgiven*. If sin were merely a disease then it would only need to be healed, but since forgiveness is needed, it must be something that condemns us. Who is condemned for being sick? Other words associated with sin are guilt, fall, conviction, something we can be “in” (ref. 1 Cor. 15:17), something that stings and has power (vs. 56), something Christ could become on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21) and we can be led into (2 Cor. 11:29). Clearly the Bible does not describe sin as a mere illness.

Next we read of the writer’s view of the Bible. Many would agree that the Bible cannot be interpreted outside of some ecclesiastical authority, but I see no such stipulation in scripture itself. Ironically, many in this “tradition” use the phrase “the Bible never says such-and-such about itself” when the topic is “Bible” or the canon of scripture, but they don’t apply that objection to the issue of an official interpreting body. The assertion that *sola scriptura* would “take the Bible out of the world in which it arose” is completely baseless. We who have anchored ourselves to the Bible stress the importance of studying context in all its aspects. The Bible was not written in the exclusive lingo of the elite or well educated, but in the vernacular. Jesus spoke often in terms the ordinary people could grasp, drawing analogies from their everyday living. It is this idea of having an official interpreting body that “takes the Bible out of the world in which it arose”.

Now we move on to the human soul. Where does this idea come from, of the possibility of a soul in Hades being “changed by the love and prayers of the righteous up until the Last Judgment”? It is not found the Bible. Never is anyone said to move from hell to heaven, either by example or by explicit teach-

ing. All mentions of people changing have to do with this mortal life. Certainly we can pray for people, but there is no more change after death: “people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

In the list about final judgment, most Christians would agree with the first two items. But the third is a bit vague; if it means by “perfected” that we will finally be in the state which all the saved have in heaven, no problem. But if it means perfect as in the absolute perfection of God, that’s unbiblical. The fourth item, however, is very wrong. Hell (eventually the Lake of Fire) is a place of eternal torment. It is a real place, not a mere “inability” on our part.

Now we come to a key teaching called *theosis* or *deification*. While no Christian would deny that we are meant to have **union** with God, Eastern Orthodox theology goes a step farther and puts it as being **made god**. Let’s see if the scripture references they give for this say what they interpret them to say.

2 Peter 1:4 says, “Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may **participate in the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” To participate in something is not to become it but to interact or be involved with it. This is far from being “made god”. John 10:34-36 is part of Jesus’ conversation with the Jews concerning his identity as the Messiah, where they try to stone him for blasphemy and he says, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are ‘gods’?” His point, in context, is not to deify humanity, but to challenge the Jews’ charge against him on the basis of his claim to be God (something many today think Jesus never said). It is a rhetorical device, not a doctrinal statement. He was basically having their charge dismissed on a technicality, something the legalistic Pharisees were quite proud of their expertise at doing.

The Psalm 86:2 reference is what Jesus quoted, not another separate proof text. Look at the context there, the whole psalm; it clearly speaks of **mere mortals who stood in the place of God** in relationship to the people. Jesus was truly a master at mocking the devious and trapping them with their own logic.

The next paragraph looks at water baptism, and like many other theologies, makes this ritual a necessary component of salvation. But the Bible does not teach this, and in fact contradicts it (see Eph. 2:8-9, 1 Peter 3:21, and Romans 4:4-5). It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit that cleanses us, and it happens at the moment of salvation. We are at that moment given many other things as well, and we don't need any official group to perform this. It applies as well to the paragraph following, where they mistakenly state that the Holy Spirit only comes upon a person via a ritual after water baptism.

Regarding 2 Peter 1:4, the word rendered "you may become" goes with the earlier phrase about promises and "divine communion". That is, the promises we've been given (past tense) are what enabled us to be in divine partnership. In contrast, Eastern Orthodoxy claims (or so they can be taken to say) that we gradually acquire divine nature itself, achieving it by our works/devotion. So they change "he has freely given us great and priceless promises which have enabled us to be in a close bond with the divine nature" to "he has freely given us great and priceless promises that we might someday become divine." The first is what is instantly done for us at salvation, while the second is what a person strives for over time. The first is about intimate relationship, while the second is about actually achieving divine nature.

The final paragraph in this quote goes back to the issue of sin and further defines it as not "a legal transgression that must be set right by a punitive sentence" but a mere "mistake". Mistakes are accidents, but the Bible calls sin an act of the will, a deliberate rebellion against God (e.g. Isaiah 7:15-16). The scriptures cited previously clearly show sin to be very much a legal transgression.

## Second Quote

Oh, the depths of conceit in the human soul, to actually think "we should ask ourselves why we allow" suffering on earth, gods that we are!! This is blatant blasphemy, and quite indistinguishable from the heathen understanding of "the divinity of man". 2 Cor. 3:17-18 most certainly does **not** say we are

“transformed into the light”, but that we “are being transformed into his image” or likeness, not his “essence”.

To call the coming “Kingdom of God to be the work of God’s children acting in their divinization, restoring the Earth and rebuilding all human institutions to eliminate hunger, hopelessness, and violence”, is pure Dominionism; see [this source](#)). We are not responsible for saving the world but for spreading the gospel, to be “salt and light”, to be ambassadors. We are not the Savior but his representatives.

Notice then that what follows from all this is a rejection of the literal return of Jesus in the Rapture, another hotly-disputed topic to be covered separately. But standard Dominionist teaching is that Jesus will not return until Christians have literally taken over the world. It’s very interesting to see how literal the Bible becomes when it’s focused not on Christ but on us and our works.

Next our “being one” with God is taken beyond unity and fellowship to our being “both human and divine”. Not all of the Orthodox go this far, and rightly so; only Jesus will ever have this dual nature. Even so, they would say that we actually “partake” of God in such a way as to share his “energies”, whatever that is supposed to mean.

Thomas Aquinas was quite mistaken about his belief that a poker in the fire “becomes” the fire. In time the fire destroys it completely; it never “takes every attribute of the fire”, or any attribute of the fire at all. It does not acquire a “dual nature” as both iron and fire. Supposedly this indicates our becoming god and yet still remaining human, but it fails both as an analogy and as a Biblical truth.

Now we come to the bottom of this slippery slope: ecumenism, a blending of all religions through mysticism. The writer clearly draws a connection between the Orthodox understanding of deification and that of the Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists. This is nothing less than the “glue” that will hold them all into a worldwide super-religion, the one prophesied in Revelation, which orthodox theology has declared “mystery”. Truth is not a popularity contest, but the writer appeals to “many great teachers on the mystical path” as a rea-

son to accept this falsehood. That some of them “frequently refer to the teachings of Jesus” is hardly a reason to endorse their views. Why ask unbelievers about Jesus when we can read the Bible? Why is the Bible to be rejected as showing us Jesus in favor of these “teachers”?

### **Third Quote**

Finally, we see that all of this really does do more than make us a participant of godliness and a recipient of grace: Man is to be a completer of the “incomplete” Trinity! How much more obvious can it be than this, that these Orthodox teachings are not orthodoxy but blasphemy?

### **Conclusion**

If we follow along the path from the seeming Biblical statements at the top to the blasphemy at the bottom, we’ll see why a small deviation from the truth at the beginning can result in a huge error at the end. People never seem to see the harm in things until they are drawn into complete heresy, and by then it may be too late. We must be very careful what we agree to when discussing these things; we must demand precise definitions and discuss their implications. As scripture warns us in 1 Cor. 5:6, “Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?” And in Luke 20:46, “Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.”

Beware of popular religions and authoritative-sounding elitists, of those who say they want to “enlighten” us and show us a better way than “those old dry denominations”. Instead take the example of Paul, who said “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

## **Roman Catholicism – Mary**

This is a response to teachings about Mary found at [Catholic Encyclopedia](#).

## The Old Testament

**Statement:** The first prophecy referring to Mary is found in the very opening chapters of the Book of Genesis (3:15): “I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.”

**Response:** As the ensuing discussion admits, the Hebrew says “he” (the woman’s seed), not “she” (the woman herself). This subtle substitution comes from the Latin Vulgate. They also assume that the woman is Mary, but it’s at least as reasonable to assume that the woman is Eve. They attribute the ultimate victory over Satan to Mary rather than to Jesus.

**Statement:** The second prophecy referring to Mary is found in Isaias 7:1-17... We may infer from all this that Mary is mentioned in the prophecy of Isaias as mother of Jesus Christ.

**Response:** The specific verse is 14: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” This is undisputed, and thus not a point of contention with Roman Catholic theology.

**Statement:** A third prophecy referring to Our Blessed Lady is contained in Micheas 5:2-3: “And thou, Bethlehem, Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall be come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel, and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity. Therefore will he give them up till the time wherein she that travaileth shall bring forth, and the remnant of his brethren shall be converted to the children of Israel.” But how does the prophecy refer to the Virgin Mary? Our Blessed Lady is denoted by the phrase, “till the time wherein she that travaileth shall bring forth”. It is true that “she that travaileth” has been referred to the Church (St. Jerome ,Theodoret), or to the collection of the Gentiles united with Christ (Ribera ,Mariana ), or again to Babylon (Calmet)??

**Response:** A much better interpretation of the woman in travail is that the prophecy concerns three stages of Israel’s history: the Age of Grace (Israel in

rejection of her Messiah), the Tribulation (travail), and the Millennium (believing remnant). Israel is again described as a woman in travail in Revelation 12, so there is little doubt that this passage refers to the nation of Israel, not Mary.

**Statement:** A fourth prophecy referring to Mary is found in Jeremias 31:22; “The Lord has created a new thing upon the earth: A woman shall compass a man.” The text of the prophet Jeremias offers no small difficulties for the scientific interpreter; we shall follow the Vulgate version of the Hebrew original.

**Response:** They admit the cryptic nature of this verse, yet apply it uncritically to Mary. The normal sense of the verse in context is that whereas a man normally protects a woman, this new situation would be a reversal of the norm; Judah would return to the Lord. To claim this as a prophecy about Mary begs the question. The remainder of their Old Testament commentary is an outlandish list of alleged “types” of Mary.

**Statement:** The Immaculate Conception of Our Blessed Lady has been treated in a SPECIAL ARTICLE.

**Response:** This “special article” offers not one shred of Biblical support for this invention, simply because there is none. They even admit: “No direct or categorical and stringent proof of the dogma can be brought forward from Scripture.” Nonetheless, they make a vain attempt to wedge Mary into the text any way they can.

## The New Testament

**Statement:** As to Mary, St. Luke (1:34) tells us that she answered the angel announcing the birth of Jesus Christ: “how shall this be done, because I know not man.” These words can hardly be understood, unless we assume that Mary had made a vow of virginity; for, when she spoke them, she was betrothed to St. Joseph.

**Response:** This alleged vow of virginity is pulled out of thin air, since no one who took such a vow would be betrothed. And there is absolutely no Scriptur-

al support for Mary having taken such a vow. She was simply stating her situation at that time, since the wedding had not yet taken place.

**Statement:** After bringing forth her Son, Mary “wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger” (Luke 2:7), a sign that she did not suffer from the pain and weakness of childbirth. This inference agrees with the teaching of some of the principal Fathers and theologians :St. Ambrose [56], St. Gregory of Nyssa [57], St. John Damascene [58], the author of *Christus patiens* [59], St. Thomas [60], etc. It was not becoming that the mother of God should be subject to the punishment pronounced in Genesis 3:16, against Eve and her sinful daughters.

**Response:** Wrapping Him up after birth has nothing whatsoever to do with whether Mary had pain in childbirth. Remember Micah 5:2-3 above? What does travail mean, if not pain? So first they say she had travail in childbirth, but now they say she didn’t; they are contradicting themselves.

**Statement:** After the Presentation, the Holy Family either returned to Bethlehem directly, or went first to Nazareth, and then moved into the city of David. At any rate, after the “wise men from the east” had followed the Divine guidance to Bethlehem, “entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him.”

**Response:** The article makes no comment on the fact that though Jesus was “adored”, Mary was not. Strange that the Mother of God would be ignored when it came to adoration.

**Statement:** As to Mary’s virginity after her childbirth, it’s not denied by St. Matthew’s expressions “before they came together” (1:18), “her firstborn son” (1:25), nor by the fact that the New Testament books repeatedly refer to the “brothers of Jesus”. [66] The words “before they came together” mean probably, “before they lived in the same house”, referring to the time when they were merely betrothed; but even if the words be understood of marital intercourse, they only state that the Incarnation took place before any such intercourse had intervened, without implying that it did occur after the Incarnation of the Son of God. [67]

The same must be said of the expression, “and he knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn son” (Matthew 1:25); the Evangelist tells us what did not happen before the birth of Jesus, without suggesting that it happened after his birth. [68] The name “firstborn” applies to Jesus whether his mother remained a virgin or gave birth to other children after Jesus; among the Jews it was a legal name [69], so that its occurrence in the Gospel cannot astonish us.

Finally, the “brothers of Jesus” are neither the sons of Mary, nor the brothers of Our Lord in the proper sense of the word, but they are His cousins or the more or less near relatives. [70] The Church insists that in His birth the Son of God did not lessen but consecrate the virginal integrity of His mother (Secret in Mass of Purification). The Fathers express themselves in similar language concerning this privilege of Mary. [71]

**Response:** Here the meanings of words are twisted beyond recognition. They would never accept such an impossibly weak argument by anyone else. They have painted themselves into a corner with the perpetual virginity teaching.

**Statement:** Mary’s Divine motherhood is based on the teaching of the Gospels, on the writings of the Fathers, and on the express definition of the Church. St. Matthew (1:25) testifies that Mary “brought forth her first-born son” and that He was called Jesus. According to St. John (1:15) Jesus is the Word made flesh, the Word Who assumed human nature in the womb of Mary. As Mary was truly the mother of Jesus, and as Jesus was truly God from the first moment of His conception, Mary is truly the mother of God. Even the earliest Fathers did not hesitate to draw this conclusion as may be seen in the writings of St. Ignatius [72], St. Irenaeus [73], and Tertullian [74]. The contention of Nestorius denying to Mary the title “Mother of God” [75] was followed by the teaching of the Council of Ephesus proclaiming Mary to be Theotokos in the true sense of the word. [76]

**Response:** So since Jesus is God in the flesh, and Mary gave birth to Him, then that makes her God’s Mother, and she is therefore divine? This is nothing short of blasphemy. No matter how many people “draw the conclusion”, it’s still the wrong one. How can Roman Catholicism then claim that they don’t worship Mary as God? Wouldn’t it be better to deny this false teaching than to

please their church and call Mary a goddess? Divine = God, there's no way around it.

**Statement:** (from the section, *Mary during the apostolic life of our Lord*): In reality, Jesus in both these passages places the bond that unites the soul with God above the natural bond of parentage which unites the Mother of God with her Divine Son. The latter dignity is not belittled; as men naturally appreciate it more easily, it's employed by Our Lord as a means to make known the real value of holiness. Jesus, therefore, really, praises His mother in a most emphatic way; for she excelled the rest of men in holiness not less than in dignity.

**Response:** The logic here is flawed; Jesus praises his mother's holiness by ignoring it? That's like saying, "I'm going to show you how much I love you by treating you like everyone else."

**Statement:** The doctrine of Mary's spiritual motherhood of men is contained in the fact that she is the antitype of Eve.

**Response:** One error is piled on top of another. She is now not only the mother of God, but of all humanity. This is almost identical to the concept of Mother Earth in Gaia worship.

**Statement:** According to the Book of Acts (1:14), after Christ's Ascension into Heaven the apostles "went up into an upper room", and: "all these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

**Response:** In spite of her exalted dignity, it was not Mary but Peter who acted as head of the assembly (1:15).

**Statement:** Mary behaved in the upper room in Jerusalem as she had behaved in the grotto at Bethlehem; in Bethlehem she had carried for the Infant Jesus, in Jerusalem she nurtured the infant Church. The friends of Jesus remained in the upper room till "the days of the Pentecost", when with "a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming?? there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them, and they were all filled

with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:1-4). Though the Holy Ghost had descended upon Mary in a special way at the time of the Incarnation, He now communicated to her a new degree of grace. Perhaps, this Pentecostal grace gave to Mary the strength of properly fulfilling her duties to the nascent Church and to her spiritual children.

**Response:** The reason Peter was head of the assembly was not “in spite of her exalted dignity”, but because she had no such thing. The phrase “in spite of” shows that the plain meaning of the passage is that Mary was not “exalted” in any way. And where is the evidence that she “nurtured the infant Church”? What “new degree of grace” was conferred upon Mary at Pentecost that was not also conferred upon all the others? Veneration of Mary in this way is pure fabrication.

**Statement:** As to the Epistles, the only direct reference to Mary is found in Galatians 4:4: “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Some Greek and Latin manuscripts, followed by several Fathers, read *gennomenon ek gynaikos* instead of *genomenon ek gynaikos*, “born of a woman” instead of “made of a woman.” But this variant reading cannot be accepted.

**Response:** It “cannot be accepted” only by the Catholic Church. Almost all English translations render it “born”, so it can hardly be considered a “variant reading”. Here again Mary is given the ability to create life in a divine way, above all other women. The fact that this is the only direct reference to Mary in the Epistles should tell them that she is not divine. If she were, she would be given much more prominence in the Bible.

**Statement:** In the Apocalypse (12:1-6) occurs a passage singularly applicable to Our Blessed Mother: And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun.

**Response:** This passage is unmistakably symbolic of the nation of Israel (see Joseph’s dream imagery in Gen. 37:9), yet Catholic theology is compelled to read Mary into every verse it possibly can. Some Catholics concede it could possibly symbolize the church, but this is only because of their erroneous as-

sumption that the church replaced Israel. And the article is completely silent about the one passage that truly symbolizes the Catholic Church and its goddess “Mary”: Revelation 17-18. How can they ignore the most visible symbolic woman in the Bible? Is the imagery too realistic, the testimony too damaging? They even admit, “But it must be kept in mind that Mary is both a figure of the Church, and its most prominent member. What is said of the Church, is in its own way true of Mary.” Now if they’d only apply that to the woman on the beast.

## Summary

The rest of the article is speculation about Mary’s life beyond the Biblical writings. What Roman Catholic theology does is scripture twisting, appeals to tradition over scripture, reliance on inferior or spurious translations, self-contradictions, and logical fallacies. It appropriates Israel’s blessings but not its curses, turns an ordinary human into a goddess, and aggressively promotes the Body above the Head.

# First Book of Enoch

## Introduction

This is a presentation of challenges for the first Book of Enoch and Gnosticism in the first century a.d., both of which have made a resurgence among Christians and non-Christians alike. What does the Bible say about Enoch? The first time anyone named Enoch is mentioned is in Gen. 4:17. But the one everyone is familiar with, the 7th from Adam, is in these passages: Gen. 5:18-24, Luke 3:37, Heb. 11:5, Jude 1:14. That’s it. There is no book of Enoch cited or mentioned, in contrast to passages such as 1 Kings 11:41, 14:19,29, and Joshua 10:13.

Now we should note that the Jude 14 reference seems to come from the Jewish 1st Book of Enoch from around the first century b.c. But just as the kings’ annals are referenced but not included in the canon as inspired, only Enoch’s

prophecy is cited as divinely given, but not necessarily the book it was recorded in.

The apostle Paul quoted from several Greek writers [*Aratus (Acts 17:28)*, *Menander (1 Cor. 15:33)*, *Epimenides (Titus 1:12)*], but nobody tries to claim that the Greek philosophers should be considered part of the Bible canon for that reason.

So we're establishing a precedent here: Just because someone is quoted in scripture, that doesn't make any and all writings by or about that person also divinely inspired. Also note that "book of" can mean either by or about, such as the books of Moses, or Job, or Esther, or Ruth.

## Date of writing

As the 7th from Adam, Enoch lived thousands of years b.c., before the Flood. But scholarship on 1st Enoch suggests a time of writing spanning 300 b.c. to 100 a.d., which is well past the time of paleo-Hebrew or some more ancient script contemporary to Enoch. So on what basis is 1st Enoch authentic to the Biblical Enoch? Yes, it was found among the DSS (*Dead Sea Scrolls*), and it was included in the Ethiopian canon, but would those two criteria be enough on their own to establish the rest of the canon? I haven't seen that consistently applied. It seems that the integrity of the canon boils down to which one has the books people think should be in it, rather than actual evidence or acceptance by the ancients.

1 Enoch 14 has Enoch speaking in the 1st person, without any preface such as "And Enoch said...", so the book itself presents Enoch as the author. Yet there is no evidence of any line of transmission from before the Flood, no mention of its preservation, no claims of any copies of it before about 300 BC.

So since there's no firm evidence that Enoch wrote a book, and since we have no writings attributed to Enoch earlier than a few centuries BC, then 1st Enoch is about him rather than by him, though the book itself says it's by him. But even if it wasn't by him, was he quoted accurately and faithfully? We have no way of knowing, outside of the Biblical quotes.

## Essenes and Gnostics

Now let's look at the Essenes and Gnostics, since this is all related. Most proponents of this book as canonical appeal to the Essenes' acceptance of it, so now we need to take a brief look at the Essenes and early Gnostic teachings.

First of all, the Bible treats Gnostic teachings as false: 1 John 4:2-3, 1 Tim. 6:20-21, Rev. 2:24. The Gnostics were known for teaching esoteric (*hidden*) knowledge, among other things, as shown in [this article](#). [Another article](#) cites Josephus and Lightfoot on the Essenes, and more discussion can be read at [Stack Exchange](#), which asks who wrote the 1st book of Enoch, and when.

Now I don't necessarily agree with every point in the list, but it's a long list and it presents sufficient reason to strongly question the authenticity of the book as inspired by God. Good points are raised in additional comments there, including that there is no evidence it was ever included in the inspired canon in the first place, such that claims it was removed are baseless.

## Content

Now let's take a look at a particular passage in 1st Enoch. In passages such as 46:3-4 you'll find the phrase "son of man", which is also seen in both Testaments in the Bible. As a figure of speech, it simply means a human being, but in some contexts it refers to the promised Messiah. So does 1st Enoch 71:14-15 refer to Jesus, or as some now insist, to Enoch?

First look at [the most accepted translation](#), and then [the challenge](#) to that translation (*standard disclaimer*).

Do those who insist that Enoch belongs in the Bible even know of this disputed meaning? Do they realize the implications? This article argues that Enoch himself is the Messiah, rather than (as they put it) "a dreamed-of messiah that is yet to come" (you can hear the disdain in that phrase). This is serious business, because many Christians believe 1st Enoch was removed from the Bible and kept hidden. But if that's true, and if the modern translation is more accu-

rate, then it contradicts all the rest of the Bible's references to the Messiah as future to Enoch.

## **Yet on the other hand...**

Some early "church fathers" rejected 1 Enoch because it agrees with Gen. 6:1-4 (!!) concerning the "sons of God" breeding with the "daughters of men", which was thought impossible and blasphemous, and gave rise to the ridiculous notion that the children of Seth were the "sons of God" and the children of Cain were the "daughters of men".

There's no reason that only these particular human unions would produce "heroes of old, men of renown", in a context where the Nephilim were just mentioned. 1 Enoch 7:2 states this more clearly, yet at the same time, we can get the same understanding by referencing Jude.

## **Conclusion**

Since there were differences of opinion regarding the Bible canon even before the time of Christ, we should not rush into either acceptance or rejection of any given book. My point in all this is that we need to apply a consistent standard, rather than allow personal preferences to be the judge of what is or isn't inspired by God. Don't just say what you believe; show how you reached that conclusion, and use that method consistently.

Nothing in 1st Enoch tells us anything that makes an iota of difference to the Gospel or the authenticity of the most widely-accepted Bible canon. Without it, we already know about fallen angels, giants, the earth as the center of God's creation, etc. So what exactly would anyone have been hiding?

Certainly extra-Biblical historical records shed light on many passages, but by itself that isn't all it takes to make a book divinely inspired. There are many true, factual books that no one tries to say are inspired of God, and divine inspiration is what the whole Bible canon debate is about. The reason it hinges on that one point is because whatever is divinely mandated carries moral authority.

But an equally pressing question is this: Why is it that Christians and non-Christians alike want so badly for 1st Enoch to be divinely inspired? Why is it held as superior to the Bible by so many, without the usual goalpost-moving demands for evidence and non-contradiction placed on the Bible? Is it only because it was revered by the Essenes, who many claim were the “real” Christians— solely because they don’t like what the Bible teaches? Is it because they consider the Bible a corrupted text, without any such criticism of 1st Enoch? Is it because 1st Enoch teaches them something they like better?

On the other hand, some believe 1st Enoch supports and validates the Bible, and for that reason should be considered canonical. Yet this opens the door to the Gnostic so-called gospels to be included as well, even though they contradict the existing canon. But in my experience, the main reason people want the Gnostic “gospels” and 1st Enoch to be canon is because they don’t like what the accepted canon teaches.

Those of us who don’t accept them are mocked as close-minded and afraid of truth, but what we really object to is a double or inconsistent standard regarding evidence and inspiration. Why is it that the Gnostic “gospels” and alleged books of Enoch aren’t attacked and denounced like the Bible, if they belong in it? Would today’s supporters of 1 Enoch have denounced it, if it had been in the Bible all this time? Why not? And why does Hollywood make movies like *The Davinci Code* to promote Gnostic works? Who is behind that sort of thing?

Here again, self-proclaimed “awake” people abandon all the principles of skepticism and evidence when a text or teaching outside of or contrary to the Bible is dangled in front of them. Even Christians will get their beliefs about the Bible from just about anyone, and they’ll hand-wave dismiss any and all who don’t accept Enoch or Gnostic works. So which side is really biased and close-minded?

# Atheism

Atheism is the philosophical assertion that no gods exist, rather than having no opinion on whether any gods exist ([source](#)). Various common, informal claims of atheism are stated and refuted below.

## Atheism is the absence of belief

Atheism asserts that no gods exist; this is a belief. A true absence of belief would be agnosticism, where someone may have a personal conviction that something doesn't exist yet still allow the possibility that they could be wrong. And in spite of whether a given individual atheist may claim that humanism is not the same as atheism, the [Secular Humanism](#) and related documents admit, proudly, that humanism is indeed a religion:

Humanist Charles F. Potter writes, “Education is thus a most powerful ally of humanism, and every American school is a school of humanism. What can a theistic Sunday school’s meeting for an hour once a week and teaching only a fraction of the children do to stem the tide of the five-day program of humanistic teaching?” (*Charles F. Potter, “Humanism: A New Religion,” 1930*)

John J. Dunphy, in his award winning essay, *The Humanist* (1983), illustrates this strategic focus, “The battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: A religion of humanity— utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to carry humanist values into wherever they teach. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new— the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism.”

Most who identify as humanists claim it’s only a desire to improve human interaction, but the quotes above are solidly humanist and anything but positive or tolerant. It’s a blatant attack upon theism, especially Christianity. Perhaps the humanists and atheists need denominations to accommodate all the variations.

## **Atheists don't bear the burden of proof or have to justify their lack of belief in God, because it's impossible to prove a negative**

Not all negatives are unprovable; it depends upon scope. Someone could prove there are no unicorns in their garage, but they couldn't prove there are no unicorns anywhere in existence. So the only time a negative cannot be proved is if the scope of the claim is infinite or otherwise unobservable. However, the one who makes the assertion carries the burden of proof; the atheist cannot escape this responsibility just because their claim is absurd, unfalsifiable, or an infinite scope.

## **God can't make a rock too big for him to lift, so God is self-contradictory and thus cannot exist**

If God is disproved due to self-contradiction, then so is atheism, since it's defined by an unfalsifiable assertion. This particular claim is an absurdity, on the level of a round square, and therefore cannot disprove anything at all. Further, if both theism and atheism are self-contradictory, then neither is possible, which means atheism is no more rational than theism.

The theory of evolution proves from another angle that atheism cannot be true due to internal contradiction. In spite of the claim of immunity from the question of origins since "evolution only means change", the fact remains that the atheist *must* believe in abiogenesis and cannot claim indifference or irrelevance to the problem. By atheism's own logic, if evolution is asserted without any starting point it cannot exist. Otherwise, atheists must concede that God can exist in spite of lacking a starting point, unless they want to claim the physical universe is eternal— which is no different from belief in an eternal God.

## **Belief in God is no different from belief in unicorns or Santa Clause; if you believe in one, you must believe in all**

This is also informally known as “the Flying Spaghetti Monster” assertion: that people have as much reason to believe there is a Flying Spaghetti Monster as that there is a God. But since people don’t identify themselves as “a-unicorns” or “a-Santas”, one must ask why anyone would self-identify as an “a-theist” if they were really all at the same level of absurdity. The fact that only theism is singled out proves that even atheists know there’s a difference.

The difference is that evidence and logic back up theism. Since we observe that matter “runs down”, then it cannot be either eternal or self-caused. This means there is a First Cause outside of the laws of physics, one that must be supernatural by definition. So while it’s entirely rational to assert a supernatural First Cause, the atheist mistakenly believes that any naturalist theory, no matter how counter-intuitive, is scientific by definition. But purely theoretical/mathematical physics has concluded that the moon isn’t there if nobody looks at it; how is this more rational than concluding that effects require causes? Rationality is not to be defined only by naturalism.

## **There is no evidence for the supernatural**

This assertion begs the question by limiting the definition of evidence to the purely natural, and then using that definition to deny any evidence exists for the supernatural. To illustrate: If you calibrate a thermometer to measure in the range of zero to 50 degrees, you can’t use it as evidence that nothing ever gets below zero or above 50.

In order for atheists to prove their assertion, they would have to devise a way to both affirm and falsify (disprove) the claim. As [someone once said](#), “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” So just as the negative assertion “there are no gods” cannot be either proved or falsified, so also the assertion “there is no evidence for the supernatural” cannot be proved or falsified.

## **Religion is a dangerous idea because it's anti-science**

This claim confuses science with philosophy. Science has strict boundaries; it must observe, test, and repeat the process. It can propose theories, but it cannot call them proofs or facts without observation and repetition. It also cannot decide what the facts mean apart from a philosophical framework in which to interpret them. A single observation can be interpreted in many different ways, even among scientists with the same interpretive bias (philosophy or worldview). Scientists are human beings not exempt or immune from faulty logic, bias, prejudice, jealousy, or falsifying data to protect careers or funding.

The claim is also based upon a false assertion (a presumed danger); it is patently false that religion is anti-science. In fact, evolutionary bias is demonstrably anti-science in that it refuses to recognize where actual empirical science leaves off and philosophical bias begins. It redefines science to include its own philosophy, then expresses outrage that others reject this new definition. It also shows fear of being challenged or having the burden of proof, because it often uses the courts to prevent certain contradictory evidence from being made known. True science would only put the evidence to the test and not predetermine the results.

If being anti-science is dangerous, then hold naturalism to the same standard as any other philosophy or worldview. All ideas that inhibit, restrict, predetermine, or otherwise interfere with empirical science are equally dangerous. And there is plenty of evidence that naturalism, through academic bias and litigation, does all of those things. Fear that allowing free choice among students would lead them to reject a certain worldview is as far from science as any theistic religion.

As for true danger rather than mere philosophical disagreement, atheism has no justification for being against such dangerous things as violence, since it cannot base morality on anything but personal preference. So while atheism may not actively promote violence (though individuals sometimes do), it also cannot say why violence is wrong on any scientific or evolutionary basis. Some atheists may object that it's only rational to preserve one's society and promote health and safety, but these are not objective, universal, scientific ar-

guments. Survival of the fittest is inherently selfish and has no motivation to give others a competitive advantage. Pregnancy and childbirth are high-mortality and high-maintenance activities, which are detrimental to personal survival. So altruism is the opposite of evolutionary philosophy, and cannot be justified objectively by atheism.

## Some rhetorical questions for atheists

An obsession is when something or someone dominates a person's mind. So what else can it be called when so many atheists spend large amounts of time and effort in Christian chatrooms, arguing and mocking incessantly? Who else spends more time on what they don't believe than what they do believe? If all unprovable beliefs are the same, why don't atheists put forth the same effort to combat belief in the tooth fairy or pink unicorns on Mars? Are Christians really any less consistent than atheists?

And why do atheists even care what anyone believes? If, as they claim, they are defined by not believing, then why is belief such an all-important matter to them? Since all attempts at scapegoating theists have been shown to be fallacious, and since atheists commit their share of crimes, then what good is atheism doing for society, and why does it matter since they say we're merely glorified pond scum?

## Conclusion

Atheism believes that if God made people **without** free will, they are puppets he forces to sin and then sends them to hell for sinning. Yet atheism also believes that if God made people **with** free will, he should not have done so, since some people would choose to defy him and then be sent to hell. Free will and not free will are mutually exclusive, so what would atheists have had God do? Create no one at all? If they're telling God that he must only create people who will freely choose to obey him, that's no different in principle from creating robots. If they're telling God he's not allowed to create anyone at all, they're saying God is not sovereign, which by definition means he's not God.

To atheists, this means that the very concept of God is irrational and God cannot exist. Yet they themselves believe that all physical matter somehow came into existence without any cause, since a physical cause begs the question and a non-physical cause can't exist. That is undeniably irrational, yet they believe it must be true regardless. Thus the dispute between theism and atheism is between two irrational philosophies, and neither is more rational than the other.

Atheism operates on a double-standard by decreeing that any theistic belief is debunked if every one of its members can't answer every single question, though atheists claim exemption from the same demand. It is far from a neutral or harmless belief and even denies that it's a belief at all. But we have shown that it is indeed a belief in non-existence. Atheism even has many zealots and activists, "priests" who are practically worshiped, and "holy books" they consider irrefutable. A great many atheists seem more sure of the existence of God than Christians, since they hate God and his followers so much and seem to enjoy mocking them. In fact, they want God to do two mutually-exclusive things: stay out of people's lives, yet micromanage them so nothing bad happens.

Atheism is thus inherently negative and self-contradictory, it's defined by what it disbelieves and cannot prove, and it behaves exactly like the theists it claims to be superior to. It redefines terms such as "free thinking", "rational", and "scientific", and then uses these novel definitions to vilify its opponents. It wants free speech for itself while forbidding it to others, whom it accuses of the very same thing. It is what it claims to be against: a close-minded, irrational, fallacious, biased, zealous, activist philosophy. The fact that atheists take offense at such a description is the ironic proof that the charges are true, because if atheism were the absence of belief, there would be nothing to either attack or take offense about.

There is no quality in atheism to make it better than other philosophies. Not all theists practice rites of worship; not all theists have a holy book; not all theists are narrow-minded in any manner not equally applicable to atheists; not all theists teach violence or suppression. If atheists are allowed to say they think they're right and everyone else is wrong, then they must grant the same right to theists. If theists are "ramming their beliefs down everyone's throats"

when they express their beliefs, then atheists are doing the same ramming when they express their disbeliefs. In theory or in practice, there is every reason to call atheism a religion, since Buddhism for example is a religion without a god as well.

It's also self-contradictory when some atheists express belief in karma. It cannot be proved; it cannot be measured; its mechanism cannot be explained. Thus it's a blind faith, and one that is at least as irrational as any theistic faith. Who manages karma? Who weighs people's lives? Who decides what they come back as? How does this return happen? How can anyone believe karma can be compared to some mindless physical process or chemical reaction, both of which happen to be highly complex and evidence of intelligent design? To think this all happens by unguided processes is clearly irrational. And why is God bad for not preventing evil, yet karma is good because evil people are being repaid for what they can't remember doing in a past life?

There are some good, truly peaceful atheists. But as with professing Christians, such people are the minority. Both the atheist and the theist often live in conflict with their stated philosophy. Both use the [no true Scotsman fallacy](#). Both undermine their own group by doing the very thing they label a fault in others. Both make many irrational arguments and fail to take their claims to their logical conclusions. So again, there is nothing in atheism that can objectively and consistently be called superior or even preferable to theism, especially Christianity.

## Evolution

Evolution is a purely naturalistic belief system about the universe, whose definition is always evolving. Though certainly not an exhaustive study, this will present the most common claims for rebuttal.

### **Natural selection is one of the mechanisms of evolution.**

To select is to remove a subset of what already exists and discard the rest, not create something new. This is one way in which bacteria “develop” resistance

to antibiotics; the drugs kill off the competition from the bacteria that already had immunity.

## **Mutation is another mechanism of evolution.**

Mutation **removes** functionality, which is another way that some bacteria “develop” immunity to antibiotics. They are devolving, like everything else. The fruit fly experiment ended in failure; deliberate, multi-generational mutation only produced bizarre fruit flies— never horseflies, houseflies, or dragonflies, much less horses, houses, or dragons. So mutation, like selection, is an enemy of evolution.

Consider also the problem of getting mutated characteristics into the gametes where they can be passed on. No learned skill can be encoded in them, and the mutation will not be passed on unless a mate with the same mutation is found, they produce viable offspring, and the offspring marry each other to keep the mutation going. The odds of favorable mutations that don’t render the offspring sterile are extremely small, but they get orders of magnitude smaller when applied to developing gills into lungs for example. So much blind faith is required at every step along the way— and on a path that unguided processes cannot follow.

## **Given enough time, anything can happen.**

So time can turn frogs into princes? This is magic, not science. Statistically, an unguided process always results in no net gain; it winds up in equilibrium. This is illustrated by the famous coin-flipping experiment: The more trials you have, the closer you get to equilibrium. So time is yet another enemy of evolution: the more time passes, the closer we get to no evolution at all. Therefore, if the universe is billions of years old, we should all be back to pond scum by now.

Three claims so far— natural selection, mutation, and time— and all three work against evolution.

## **Evolution is only concerned with change over time, not origins.**

Evolution **must** believe in matter from non-matter and life from non-life; it has no choice. And it is hypocritical for evolutionists to insist that creationists explain where God came from, while they exempt themselves from explaining where the first life or the singularity came from. If someone cannot explain the beginning, they have no right to claim absolute knowledge of what happened since then in pre-history.

## **There is likely to be life everywhere in the universe. This proves that regardless of the odds, life does arise from non-life quite often.**

First, this has only been predicted, not observed. Second, the more life is found on other planets, the more absurd the theory of abiogenesis becomes, since the odds of it happening even once are very slim. This again is a belief in magic and miracles that disregards observation and probability. How can belief in an intelligent Designer be less rational?

## **Science will eventually have all the answers.**

Time to the rescue again? The more science discovers, the less likely it becomes that answers about origins or alleged evolution will come. The smallest living cells, once thought to be simple and primitive, are now known to be incredibly complex biological factories of ingenious design. But this is blind faith in naturalism, and if evolutionists can have faith then so can creationists. We know through archeology that history has not been a steady climb from ignorance and simplicity to knowledge and complexity; there were ancient civilizations whose technology still surpasses our own.

## **The present is the key to the past.**

As just explained in the previous point, the past has been very different from the present, and this is not a scientific statement anyway. Science can only ex-

amine the present; forensics or legal evidence is required in order to examine the past. Evolution also fails to face the insurmountable odds of symbiotic evolution such as flowers and bees; to think that these interdependencies evolved in perfect synchrony over millions of years is at least as absurd as anything proposed by creationists.

## **Design is only an illusion, something we presume because we are designers.**

How can people look at a jet engine and say “Design!” but look at its designers and say “Accident!”? This is utter denial; it ignores evidence of design based upon the designer. How did evolutionists ever expect to use [SETI](#) to detect an intelligent signal from space, when they refuse to define “intelligent”? The laws of physics/nature are designs of their own; which came first, the laws or the matter they act upon? Evolution does not have, never can have, and flatly refuses to have, an answer. It cannot account for **information coding**, which requires a sender and receiver who both know the code.

## **Naturalism is unbiased and therefore superior to supernaturalism.**

Naturalism is anti-science because it limits the interpretation of data and presumes outcomes before the experiment has begun. Take the dating of ancient artifacts or life for example; evolution must first presume the scale (very long periods of time, the magic wand) and then discard or adjust any “anomalies” in measurement which were unwanted or unexpected. Yet even a child knows that you don’t measure oven temperature with a body thermometer; the scale is way off, in spite of both being thermometers. But when the scale is unknown, a truly scientific approach would be to use a wide variety of scales. One must presume long ages before choosing a long-age scale. And if it is objected that certain decaying properties tell us the scale, the response is that all such techniques begin with assumptions, not observations.

## Conclusion

We're all still waiting for someone to explain how numerous co-dependencies (e.g. flowers and bees) all evolved in perfect synchronization for millions of years without fail. Or how "selection" creates new information, when to select means to take a subset of what already exists. Or how an unguided process can ever have a net gain in any direction; statistically, it's no different from flipping a coin, which shows that the greater the number of trials, the closer we come to no net gain in either direction. Or how learned skills can be encoded into the gametes in at least one male and one female so the next generation inherits it. Or how mutation can account for evolution when every experiment has failed to even begin to turn one organism into another; e.g. the "fruit fly" experiment, which only ever produced mutated fruit flies rather than house flies, horse flies, or dragon flies.

As with its partner atheism, evolution is a blind faith, and it exempts itself from scrutiny on questions it cannot answer (e.g. abiogenesis). It is also an unfalsifiable theory since no discovery is ever deemed sufficient to debunk it; instead, the theory simply "evolves" and is thus unscientific. Despite the discovery of viable blood cells in the bones of dinosaurs, despite the discovery of "primitive" animals such as the Coelacanth alive today, despite the the discovery of the amazing complexity of life at its most basic level, the theory itself is clung to like a security blanket. Peer review and universities are controlled and guarded by evolutionists. Even some of their own proponents now admit that true scientific discovery has been hijacked by a religious scientism, much like the prevailing view of the scientific community with whom the Roman Catholic Church sided against Galileo.

## Further Reading

- [Debunking Evolution](#)
- [Science Against Evolution](#)
- [Evo for Intellectuals](#)
- [Evolution Refuter](#)
- [Electric Universe](#)

- [What Color Were Adam and Eve?](#)
- [Noah's Ark, Flood](#)
- [Creation-Evolution Headlines](#)
- [Missing Secrets of Magnetism](#)
- [Common Sense Science](#)
- [Win the prize for proving cellular evolution](#)

## Gnosticism

For this topic, please read the excellent article [here](#), summarized below.

### 1. Sample of Claims (2nd to 4th century AD)

- That Jesus had a twin and was married to Mary Magdalene
- That Gospels originally in the Bible were destroyed
- That the cross spoke and walked out of the tomb later
- That Judas was a hero who secretly carried out Jesus' instructions

### 2. Teachings

- The material world is bad and under the control of evil, ignorance, or nothingness, but the spirit world is good.
- A divine spark is somehow trapped in some humans and it alone is capable of redemption.
- Salvation is through secret knowledge by which individuals come to know themselves, their origin, and their destiny.
- Since a good God could not have created an evil world, it must have been created by an inferior, ignorant, or evil god. The true, good God created Archons who produced other Archons until a mistake by Sophia (Wisdom) led to the creation of the evil Archon who created our world and pretends to be God. Sparks of Sophia in some humans fill them with an urge to return to the Pleroma (divine realm) where they belong.

### 3. Implications

- Mortal flesh is corrupt, so it must be either subdued or indulged, but either way, Jesus could not have become mortal or he would have been sinful.
- This belief led to Docetism, meaning that Jesus only appeared to be physical.
- An alternative to Docetism was that a “Christ spirit” entered Jesus’ mortal body until just before he was crucified, or that someone else died in his place. The resurrection was a myth or spiritual only.

#### 4. When Did Gnosticism Arise?

- Earliest date unknown, but androgyny was a pervasive theme since Plato. Some see a connection to Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, or Judaism, and there was much hatred of the God of the Old Testament.
- The New Testament’s statements about the importance of Jesus coming in the flesh were likely rebuttals to early Gnostic claims.
- Later Gnostic writings from the Nag Hammadi collection are clear reactions to already-existing Christian apostolic writings.

#### 5. Valentinus Invented “Christian” Gnosticism

- This 2nd century pope claimed to have received teachings from a follower of Paul named Theodas or Theudas.
- His [teachings](#) were esoteric (hidden) claims of instruction from Jesus, which enabled only the adept or enlightened to understand the scriptures.
- The Godhead manifests itself through a process of self-unfolding in the subsequent multiplicity of being while maintaining its unity.
- God is androgynous (the Baphomet, a known Satanic dyad, meaning both male and female).
- Everything in the physical realm is the result of God thinking about it. (This is essentially the conclusion of theoretical physics via [the Delayed-Choice Quantum Eraser experiment](#), which holds that nothing exists unless some conscious being “knows” it.)
- The Son was also brought into being in this way, and was androgynous like the Father. He manifests as 26 different entities or Aeons in male-female pairs.
- The Fall into sin is a convoluted story of division and illusion.

- Salvation is by achieving Gnosis, which joins a person with an angel.
6. Early church leader opposition to Gnosticism
- Clashed with scripture
  - Recognized as the same lie Satan had told to Eve
  - Apostolic succession, hierarchy and offices, and official canon were largely reactions in an attempt to prevent heresy.
7. Was it wrong to reject Gnosticism?
- Not when compared to the teachings of the apostles.
  - Burden of proof is on newer teachings.
8. How do we know about Gnosticism?
- Much of Gnosticism was only known in the early centuries AD in critiques of it.
  - Discoveries since the 18th century proved that the critics were actually less harsh than they could have been.
  - The Nag Hammadi Library is the biggest collection of Gnostic writings, including the forged “Gospel” of Judas, who it paints as a hero for helping liberate Jesus from his body.
9. How Christianity related to Gnosticism
- Christians considered it rank heresy and an attack on the true faith.
  - All Gnosticism’s “gospels” were clearly forged.
  - Gnostics considered themselves above Christians in enlightenment.
  - Gnosticism essentially turns every Christian teaching upside down and blasphemes Jesus.

## Islam

This is a very basic look at Islam. [Here](#) is a more thorough and up-to-date resource for further reading. Sources used:

- The Koran Interpreted by A. J. Arberry
- **The Facts on Islam** by John Ankerberg and John Weldon
- Behind the Veil-- Unmasking Islam by Abd El Schafi

- **Aspects of Islam** by D. B. MacDonald
- **Islam: A Way of Life** by Philip K. Hitti
- **Evidence That Demands A Verdict** by Josh McDowell

## **The Quran— External Evidence**

The text shows evidence of corruption. It contains many grammatical errors and non-Arabic words, and there are many conflicting readings. Many parts of the originals have been lost. For example, one Sura (chapter) originally had 200 verses in the days of Ayesha, but by the time of the Uthman standardized text, it had only 73. There are also many instances of verses being added or removed for political reasons, or due to disputes between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. After Mohammad's death there was great confusion as to what material should be included in the Quran. In the mid 600s, a standard text was made official and all others were destroyed.

Obviously, compared to the mountain of external evidence supporting the Bible, there just isn't much to say about the Quran. As a result, most Muslim apologists will center their arguments around attacks on the Bible. This is why it's so important for Christians to know the facts about our Biblical texts, and to be familiar with Christian apologetics.

## **The Quran— Internal Evidence**

Using the current official Quran text, are there any self-contradictions, or discrepancies with the Bible? Self-contradictions abound. Either all Noah's family was saved, or some drowned. Either God took 8 days to create the world, or he took 7. There are several different accounts of Mohammad's original call to be a prophet.

Discrepancies with the Bible also abound, so the only way for Muslims to accept the Quran's teaching that the Bible is God's Word is to claim that the Bible has been corrupted. But since the Quran was written only a few hundred years after the Bible was finished, how can anyone account for such a huge degree of corruption in such a short time? If God was incapable of protecting

his Word even for a few hundred years, why should we believe the Quran has been uncorrupted for over a thousand?

The Bible and the Quran are hopelessly incompatible, and the evidence overwhelmingly supports the Bible as being the true Word of God. There is just no evidence of any kind for the Quran to stand on.

## **Doctrinal Statements**

### **The Bible**

- Genesis 16:11-12, 17:18-21, 21:3 Isaac, Ishmael, covenant
- Matthew 1:1-17 Jesus' genealogy from Abraham and Isaac
- Luke 3:24-38 Jesus' genealogy back to Adam
- Galatians 4:22-31 two covenants
- Genesis 1:26, Ex. 3:14, Deut. 6:4, Ps. 45:6-7, Isaiah 46:9, Matt. 28:19, Luke 11:15, John 14:26, 16:13, John 17:1-5, 20:22, Acts 1:4-5, 2:33, 19:2, etc. proof of the Trinity
- John 5:18, 6:38, 10:30 Jesus & Father One yet distinct
- Luke 1:35, John 1:1-5, 14, 18, 3:16 the Son of God
- Isaiah 48:16 God doesn't speak in secret
- John 2:19-21, 1 Tim. 2:3-6 crucifixion, resurrection
- Rev. 22:13 Jesus is the FIRST and the LAST
- Malachi 2:16, Matt. 5:31-32, Mk. 10:2-12, Col 3:19, 1 Peter 3:7 husbands and wives
- Deut. 32:35, Isaiah 34:8, Rom. 12:19, 1 Peter 3:9 teachings on vengeance
- John 3:16-17, Acts 4:10-12, Rom. 5:10, 10:9-10, Eph. 2:8-9 Salvation by faith, not works, only through Jesus

### **The Quran**

Note: Sura numbers differ from one translation to another.

- Hostility towards Jews and Christians Sura 2:105-115, 129, 9:28-39
- No religion but Islam; others are losers Sura 3:79
- Believers don't take Jews / Christians as friends Sura 5:56
- Lie in ambush for infidels, who must repent or die Sura 9:5
- Salvation by works Sura 9:18
- Abraham was a Muslim! Sura 3:60
- Mohammad is naught but a Messenger Sura 3:138
- Mohammad seal (last) of the prophets Sura 33:40
- A man can beat a rebellious wife Sura 4:38

## **The Quran's Jesus**

- Not crucified; it was a likeness of Him Sura 4:135
- Not God, just a messenger Sura 4:169, 5:19, 76, 79
- Not the Messiah Sura 5:19, 76
- Not the Son of God Sura 19:91, 93

## **The Quran's God**

- Made a covenant with Abraham and Ishmael Sura 2:119
- Has no son Sura 19:91, 93
- Is the same as the God of the Bible (YHWH) Sura 29:45
- Has not begotten Sura 112:1
- Is not a Trinity Sura 4:169, 5:77

## **Motivation**

### **The Bible**

The Bible commands us to love God and love other people. It teaches respect for property and authority, considerate treatment of the weak, and concern for

the lost. It shows us how to administer justice, cope with adversity, and return the love of God.

The highest ideals known to mankind are found in the Bible. Any who accept it as the Word of God are powerfully motivated to exhibit the highest standards in all areas of life. Contrary to most, if not all, other “holy books”, the Bible emphasizes the condition of the heart as of first importance, with outward behavior being changed as a result.

## The Quran

Although the Quran does teach respect for property and other high ideals, its motivation is not the love of God but the fear of him. Outward behavior is essential to salvation, and believers obey not because they want to, but because they must. The teachings of the Quran motivate men to domineer women, to hate and kill, and to ruthlessly spread Islam by force. Jews and Christians are named as the enemies of Islam and are condemned to Gehenna.

## Practice

### The Bible

Practice is, of course, the result of motivation. The obvious result of following the teachings of the Bible is a civilizing influence on society. Historically, the Bible has had a strong, positive effect on the development of humane governments and much scientific research. Yes, there have been those who did evil in the name of Christianity, but they did so **in spite of what the Bible says, not because of it**. Where true Biblical Christianity is practiced, people are free and prosperous. The United States has been an example of how God blesses nations that honor him (and what happens when they stop).

### The Quran

The results of acting on what the Quran motivates people to do are obvious. Islam was spread by the sword, in obedience to the Quran and by the example

of Mohammad. After his death, many who had followed him abandoned his teachings, thinking they were free at last. But the true believers persecuted them until Islam was firmly established. In every country where Islam has been dominant, the people have been impoverished and oppressed. No Islamic country allows freedom for all people. Those Muslims that are considered extreme or fanatical are simply taking the Quran literally. Contrary to popular opinion, it isn't the **violent** Muslims who are not practicing true Islam, it's the **peaceful** ones. Those who claim to be peaceful must somehow spiritualize the Quran, believing it to teach only spiritual warfare. But there is no contextual justification for such a view, and no historical precedent.

To our shame, though, some Christians do the same thing. They don't like the clear teachings of Scripture, so they spiritualize them to mean something else. The people who do that are ripe for deception, because they will be easily persuaded to accept false teachings and religions. If the actual words don't matter, then any belief will do.

The following quotes are from the preface to Volume II of **The Koran Interpreted**:

- **p. 8** “Whenever I hear the Quran chanted... there is sounding all the time the insistent beat of a drum.”
- **p. 10** “When it is read aloud or recited it has an almost hypnotic effect that makes the listener indifferent to its sometimes strange syntax and its sometimes, to us, repellent content.”
- **p. 16** “This, the mystic's approach, is surely the right approach to the study of the Quran.”

Since the Quran is best “revealed” when chanted, it bears a strong resemblance to shamanism (witchcraft) and Hinduism; the “western” concepts of analysis and logical reason are abandoned in favor of emotion and “enlightenment”. This, of course, points out yet another difference between Allah and the God of the Bible: One is a God of order and reason, and the other is a god whose writings can only be truly known through chanting and emotion, the “mystic's approach.”

## Leading by Example

### Jesus

When studying religions, it's a good idea to find out what kind of people founded them. It's one thing for your friends to speak well of you, but another for your enemies to do the same. This is true of Jesus. Whether in the Bible or other sources, even his enemies have had to acknowledge the superiority of his teachings. He is flawless in every way, and is still the only "religious figure" to have risen from the dead. After seeing his life on earth and hearing his teachings, the world must at least acknowledge him as the best example of a religious leader. No other person in history is as widely quoted or emulated.

### Mohammad

From the Preface to Volume I of **The Quran Interpreted:**

- **p. 15** "If Mohammad... was indeed the illiterate person the Muslims represent him to have been, then... the Quran is, as they assert it to be, a standing miracle."
- **p. 15** "...he was... the victim of a certain amount of self-deception... liable to morbid and fantastic hallucinations..."
- **p. 16** "he was... an earnest though mistaken teacher..."

### Conclusion

The Quran is composed mostly of endless repetitions of the anti-infidel theme, with a hodgepodge of some Biblical passages. Actual doctrinal statements are few and far between. Mohammad and his successors have waged "holy war" for centuries, and Islamic countries to this day oppress and persecute non-Muslims.

## Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that their version of the Bible (the [New World Translation](#) or NWT) is the only correct one, and that mainstream Christians bash them for no reason. Of course they're guilty of bashing as well, and the general arguments they present against our Bible (bias, tampering, etc.) apply at least as much to theirs, and uniquely to their stepping out of the bounds of semantic range in order to turn Jesus into a lesser being.

Jehovah is an Anglicized version of the Hebrew word YHWH which means "I am". The NWT is fraught with translation errors (see [these scholarly assessments](#)). For example, they render Zech. 12:10b as "and they will look to the one whom they pierced" when the Hebrew says "and they will look upon me, whom they pierced". According to the Masoretic text, the word used here is the compound "Ahl'lee", meaning "upon me". Here are scriptures that challenge the belief that Jesus is either not divine at all or a lesser being:

- Isaiah 9:6 How can the Son be "the mighty God, the everlasting Father"?
- Isaiah 44:24 and Col. 1:16 YHWH and Jesus are the Creator.
- Isaiah 43:11, Luke 2:11, Acts 4:10-12 YHWH and Jesus are the Savior.
- Ex. 34:14, Daniel 7:14 YHWH and Jesus are worshiped as God.
- John 1:1-3, 14, 8:58-59, 10:30-33, Rom. 9:5, Heb. 1:8 Jesus is God ("I AM", I and Father are one)
- Phil. 2:5-11, Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 3:16, 1 John 4:2 Jesus is God in the flesh
- Psalm 110:1, Rev. 22:16 Jesus the Lord is both the Root and Offspring of David.
- Col. 1:14-20 "Firstborn of all creation" doesn't mean "first created thing" but "one with authority ruling over all creation" (see Ex 4:22, Job 18:13, Ps 89:27, Jer. 31:9; Jesus is also called "the firstborn from the dead" in Rev. 1:5). Also supported by v. 16 which shows that Jesus created EVERYTHING that was created (which, of course, doesn't include God, who is eternal).
- Gen. 1:26, Ex. 3:14, Psalm 45:6-7 Elohiym is a plural noun but is used with a singular verb.
- Mat. 18:19 "in the **name** (not **names**) of the Father, Son, Spirit"

- Isaiah 46:9, 48:12-16, John, Acts 2:33, 19:2, Romans 8:11, 27, 15:16, 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 2 Cor. 3:17-18, 5:5, 13:14, Gal. 4:6, Eph. 1:13-14, Heb. 9:14, 1 Peter 1:2, 3:18, Rev. 22:13, 16 all show the trinitarian nature of God.

Here are scriptures showing that we cannot be saved by our good works:

- Isaiah 64:6 All our “goodness” is like filthy rags
- Php. 3:9 Saved by **Jesus’** righteousness, not ours
- Eph 2:8-9 You are saved by grace (gift, not reward)
- Gal 2:20-3:5 Receive Spirit by believing
- Rom. 3 All have sinned (why only God can pay for our sins)
- Rom. 6:23 Gift of God is eternal life
- Rom. 10:9 Believe and confess
- Rom. 4:5 Salvation without works
- Heb. 12:2 Jesus author of our faith
- John 14:6 Jesus only way to Father

And of course, scripture says that salvation is guaranteed. 1 John 5:13 says that believers **know** they’re saved.

We must ask ourselves how we determine truth or authority. Without an objective standard that can be investigated, truth becomes relative and subjective. If truth is changeable or arguable, then there is no such thing as truth, and one person’s or group’s truth is no better than anyone else’s.

Another question is what the JW faith has to offer. Do they have assurance that they’ll ever get to Heaven? How good is good enough? Can they lose their place in Heaven? Does their church kick them when they’re down? (There is plenty of evidence that it does, as a matter of official teaching and practice.) Contrast this with the guaranteed salvation of the Bible.

## **More scholarly quotes about the NWT**

Many scholars refer to the New World Translation as a commentary on the Bible instead of a translation in light of the way the text has been altered to fit

the various Society doctrines. These changes are particularly evident when the subjects of hell, the Trinity, or the immortality of the soul are discussed. The following is a representative list of passages altered in the Society's Bible:

Heb. 1:8, Luke 23:43, 1 John 5:20, 1 Cor. 11:30, Phil. 2:5, 1 Cor. 14:14, John 1:1-2, Cor. 5:1, Col. 1:15-18, Gal. 5:15, Titus 2:13, Gal. 6:18, Acts 2:17, Heb. 10:39, 1 Pet. 3:18, 19, Heb. 12:9, Jude 1:19, Heb. 12:28, 1 John 4:1-6, Rev. 5:10, Rev. 8:9, Acts 20:7, Mark 1:4, Col. 2:12

## **Observations, Evaluations, And Criticisms of the NWT**

These are by noted Greek and New Testament scholars. The comments are particularly directed toward the NWT translation of John 1:1, but are indicative of the tone of their observations about the NWT translation in general.

DR. J.R. MANTEY (who is quoted on pages 1158-1159, of the Society's Kingdom Interlinear Translation): "A shocking mistranslation". "Obsolete and incorrect". "It is neither scholarly nor reasonable to translate John 1:1 'The Word was a god.'"

DR. BRUCE M. METZGER of Princeton University (Professor New Testament Language and Literature): "A frightful mistranslation...", "erroneous...", "pernicious..." "reprehensible...". "If the YHWH's Witnesses take this translation seriously, they are polytheists."

DR. SAMUEL J. MIKOLASKI of Zurich, Switzerland: "This anarthrous (used without the article) construction does not mean what the indefinite article 'a' means in English. It is monstrous to translate the phrase 'the Word was a god.'"

DR. PAUL L. KAUFFMAN of Portland, Oregon: "The YHWH's Witnesses [translators] evidence an abysmal ignorance of the basic tenets of Greek grammar in their mistranslation of John 1:1."

DR. CHARLES L. FEINBERG of La Mirada, California: “I can assure you that the rendering which the YHWH’s Witnesses give John 1:1 is not held by any reputable Greek scholar.”

DR. JAMES L. BOYER of Winona Lake, Indiana: “I have never heard of, or read of any Greek scholar who would agree to the interpretation of this [John 1:1] verse insisted upon by the YHWH’s Witnesses... I have never encountered one of them [Society member] who had any knowledge of the Greek language.”

DR. WALTER MARTIN (who does not teach Greek but has studied the language): “The translation ‘a god’ instead of ‘God’ is erroneous and unsupported by any good Greek scholarship, ancient or contemporary, and is a translation rejected by all recognized scholars of the Greek language, many of whom are not even Christians, and cannot fairly be said to be biased in favor of the orthodox contention.”

DR. WILLIAN BARCLAY of the University of Glasgow, Scotland: “The deliberate distortion of truth by this sect is seen in their New Testament translations. John 1:1 is translated: ‘the Word was a god.’ a translation which is grammatically impossible. It is abundantly clear that a sect which can translate the New Testament like that is intellectually dishonest.”

DR. F.F. BRUCE of the University of Manchester, England: “Much is made by Arian amateur grammarians of the omission of the definite article with ‘God’ in the phrase ‘and the Word was God.’ Such an omission is common with nouns in a predicative construction... ‘a god’ would be totally indefensible.”

(The late Dr. Barclay and Dr. Bruce are generally regarded as Great Britain’s leading Greek scholars. Each have New Testament translations in print.)

DR. ERNEST C. COLWELL of the University of Chicago: “A definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb... this statement cannot be regarded as

strange in the prologue of the gospel which reaches its climax in the confession of Thomas: 'My Lord and my God.' (John 20:28)"

DR. PHILIP B. HARNER of Heidelberg College: "The verb preceding an anarthrous predicate, would probably mean that the LOGOS was 'a god' or a divine being of some kind, belonging to the general category of THEOS but a distinct being from HO THEOS. In the form the John actually uses, the word THEOS is placed at the beginning for emphasis [thus ruling out the 'a god' translation]."

DR. J. JOHNSON of California State University, Long Beach: "No justification whatsoever for translating THEOS EN HO LOGOS as 'the Word was a god.' There is no syntactical parallel to Acts 23:6 where there is a statement in indirect discourse; John 1:1 is direct... I am neither a Christian nor a Trinitarian."

DR. EUGENE A. NIDA, head of Translation Department, American Bible Society: "With regard to John 1:1, there is of course a complication simply because the New World Translation was apparently done by persons who did not take seriously the syntax of the Greek." (Responsible for the Good News Bible -- the committee worked under him.)

DR. B.F. WESTCOTT (whose Greek New Testament text -- not the English part -- is used in the Kingdom Interlinear Translation): "The predicate (God) stands emphatically first, as in John 4:24. It is necessarily without the article... No idea of inferiority of nature is suggested by [this] form of expression, which simply affirms the true deity of the Word... in the third clause 'the Word' is declared to be 'God', and so included in the unity of the Godhead."

DR. J.J. GRIESBACH (whose Greek New Testament text -- not the English part -- is used in the Society's publication The Emphatic Diaglott): "So numerous and clear are the arguments and testimonies of Scriptures in favor of the true Deity of Christ, that I can hardly imagine how, upon the admission of the Divine authority of Scripture, and with regard to fair rules of interpretation, this doctrine can by any man be called in doubt. Especially the passage, John 1:1-3, is so clear and so superior to all exception, that by no daring ef-

forts of either commentators or critics can it be snatched out of the hands of the defenders of the truth.”

Blue Letter Bible, [expose of JW](#).

### From [this source](#):

New Testament, 1950. Frederick W. Franz, ed., *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures Rendered from the Original Language by the New World Translation Committee*. Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1950.

**Bible, 1961.** Frederick W. Franz, ed., **The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, rendered from the Original Languages by the New World Bible Translation Committee. Revised A.D. 1961.** Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1961. The Old Testament was originally published in parts from 1953 to 1960. The whole was revised for the one-volume edition in 1961, and subsequently revised in 1970 and 1984. The publisher of this version has never made public the names of the translators. But former members of the Governing Body of the YHWH’s Witnesses organization have identified the members of the committee as Nathan H. Knorr (President of the organization), Frederick W. Franz (Vice-President), George D. Cangas, and Albert D. Schroeder. According to Raymond V. Franz, the “principal translator of the Society’s New World Translation” was Frederick W. Franz.<sup>(1)</sup> According to M. James Penton, “to all intents and purposes the New World Translation is the work of one man, Frederick Franz.”<sup>(2)</sup> Franz afterwards became the President of the organization, from 1977 to 1992, and was responsible for the revisions.

The Forward to the first edition of the New Testament (1950) explained the need for the version, and also indicated the reason for its name: “It befits the significant time of transition from the old world to the righteous **new world** that translations of the Scriptures today should as far as possible eliminate the misleading influence of religious traditions which have their roots in paganism.” (p.7, emphasis added.)

The New Testament adheres to the text of Westcott and Hort. It is a fairly literal translation, for the most part, but it does have some peculiar non-literal renderings. These are the result of the committee's efforts to conform the version to the doctrines of the YHWH's Witnesses. "YHWH" is given as a translation for **kurios** (Lord) in the New Testament whenever the Father is meant, but not when it refers to Christ, the Son. "Torture stake" is put instead of "cross" because the YHWH's Witnesses believe that the cross is an idolatrous symbol introduced by the Roman Catholic Church. And because this sect teaches that Jesus Christ was merely an angel, the version reflects a Unitarian bias in several places.

## Examples of Unitarian bias

Gen. 1:1-2 "In [the] beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth proved to be formless and waste and there was darkness upon the surface of [the] watery deep; and God's active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters." The *ruach elohim* ("Spirit of God") of the Hebrew is interpreted "God's active force" in order to avoid the Trinitarian understanding of the "Spirit."

Zech. 12:10 "...they will look upon the one whom they have pierced..." Here the Hebrew "look upon me whom they have pierced," in which God is the speaker, has been altered in order to avoid the implication that the one who is to be pierced (on the cross) is God.

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." Instead of the literal "the Word was God," we have "a god," which the sect interprets as "an angelic being."

Col. 1:15-17 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist." Because the sect teaches that Christ was a created being rather than eternal God,

the word “other” is inserted several times. The first edition of the translation did this without brackets.

Heb. 1:8 “God is your throne forever” (a nonsensical statement) is put instead of “your throne, O God, is forever” because this statement refers to Christ.

The **New World Translation** is widely seen as an example of sectarian bias in Bible translation.

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Robert H. Countess, **The YHWH’s Witnesses’ New Testament: a Critical Analysis of the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures** (2nd ed. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1987).

Bruce M. Metzger, “The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures.” **The Bible Translator** 15/3 (July 1964), pp. 150-153.

Bruce M. Metzger, “The YHWH’s Witnesses and Jesus Christ: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal.” **Theology Today** 10 (1953): 65-85.

1. Raymond V. Franz, **Crisis of Conscience** (Atlanta: Commentary Press, 1982), p. 50.

2. M. James Penton, **Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of YHWH’s Witnesses** (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 174.

## Mormonism

This is a very basic look at Mormonism, also known as the Latter Day Saints. Key falsehoods about Mormonism from an ex-member can be found [here](#).

In studying major world religions, it becomes clear that the founder of Mormonism, [Joseph Smith](#), plagiarized Islam, as can be seen in [this](#) comparison. To this we can add the male-centric nature of both, as shown [here](#) and [here](#).

Both view heaven and earth as places of perpetual sexual indulgence for men, and perpetual submission for women.

As detailed in other chapters here, the Bible passes all tests of authenticity and integrity. No such support exists for the Book of Mormon; its authenticity depends completely on the integrity of Joseph Smith and his alleged witnesses. But Smith was proven to be a liar when he claimed to have translated the golden plates from “reformed Egyptian”. He took the translation to be verified by a Prof. Charles Anthon, who concluded that this was merely a hoax made up by Smith, but Smith claimed he said it was authentic. Some of the witnesses of the golden plates later disavowed ever seeing them and were condemned by Smith. So Smith and his witnesses have been discredited; see also [this source](#).

The [subtitle](#) of [the Book of Mormon](#) is “Another Testament of Jesus Christ”. This is countered by 2 Cor. 11:14, which says that all other teachings than what the original apostles taught are false. The chapter headings sometimes make reference to America, but it never appears in the text, and there is no way to identify it from the vague descriptions of places and geography it contains. Large sections of text are taken verbatim from the Bible, but out of context and confused. Over all, the Book of Mormon contains the writings of one who is described clearly in Colossians 2:18-19.

Concerning priesthood, Mormonism teaches [two priestly offices](#): Aaron and Melchizedek. But Hebrews 7:12-17 shows that the Aaronic priesthood was replaced by the Melchizedek priesthood, and that Jesus holds that position forever. No other priests are needed or qualified. Only those who are in Christ are priests (1 Peter 2:9), which includes all true believers. Mormon priests simply have no authority.

We must be discerning. For example, Mormons will say they believe that salvation is found only in faith in Jesus and that there is one God. But the meanings of those words need to be specified, since their church [teaches](#) that there are in fact millions of gods running their own planets. [This article](#) quotes their president Hinckley: “As God is, man may become. We believe in eternal progression.” Salvation for them is faith plus works, and thus never guaranteed.

Mormonism is indeed “a different gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4, Gal. 1:6). There is a more thorough examination of Mormonism [here](#).