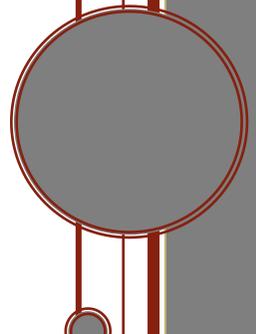


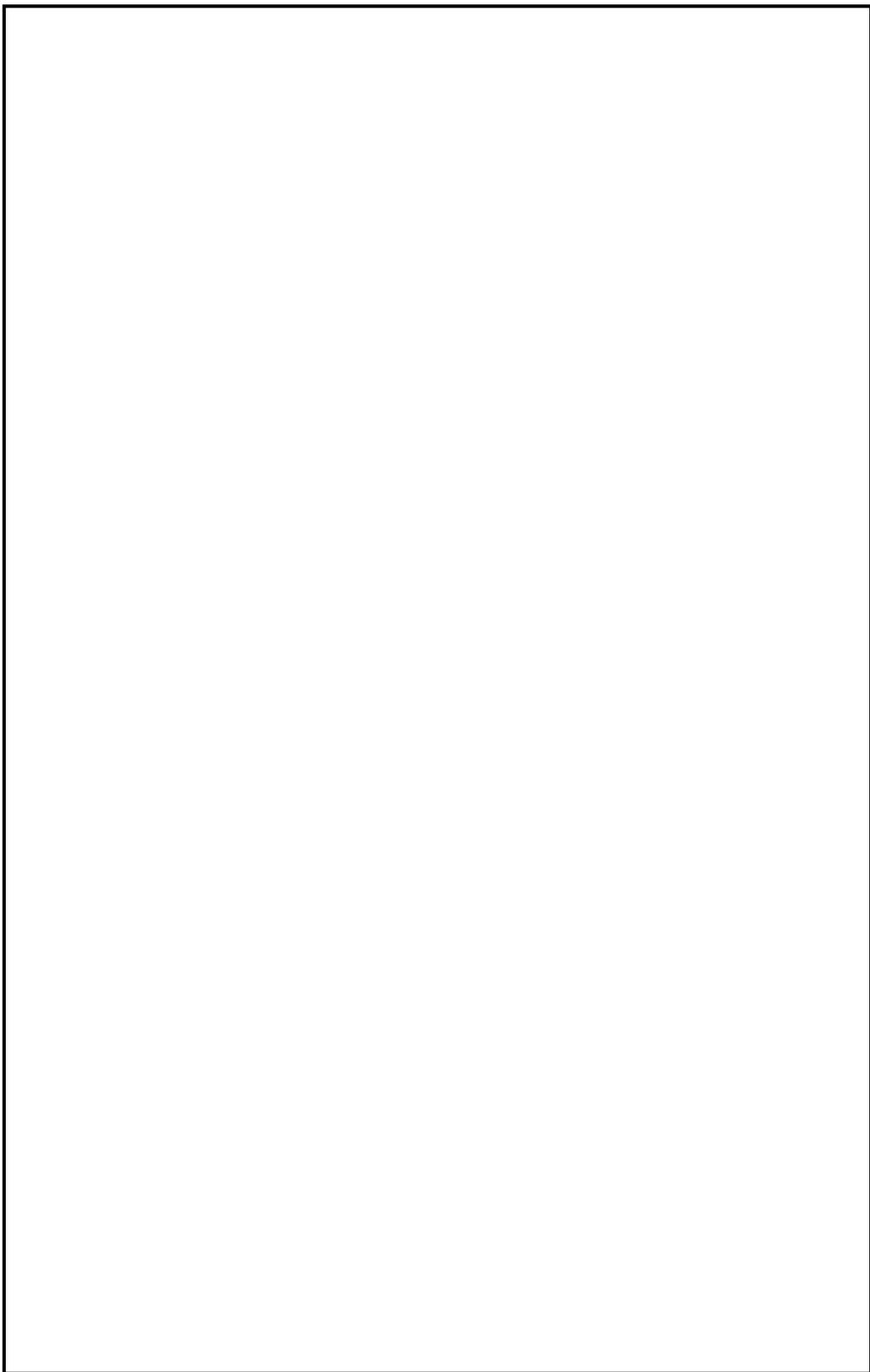
RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

Lesson Two: Explaining the “God” of the Bible

His thoughts and ways, His holy attributes,
how He reveals Himself to mankind, and
His expectations of mankind because of His
self-revelation ... along with many
questions that we must ask ourselves –
especially if He desires to involve Himself
with us forever.

Larry E. Ford





© 2008

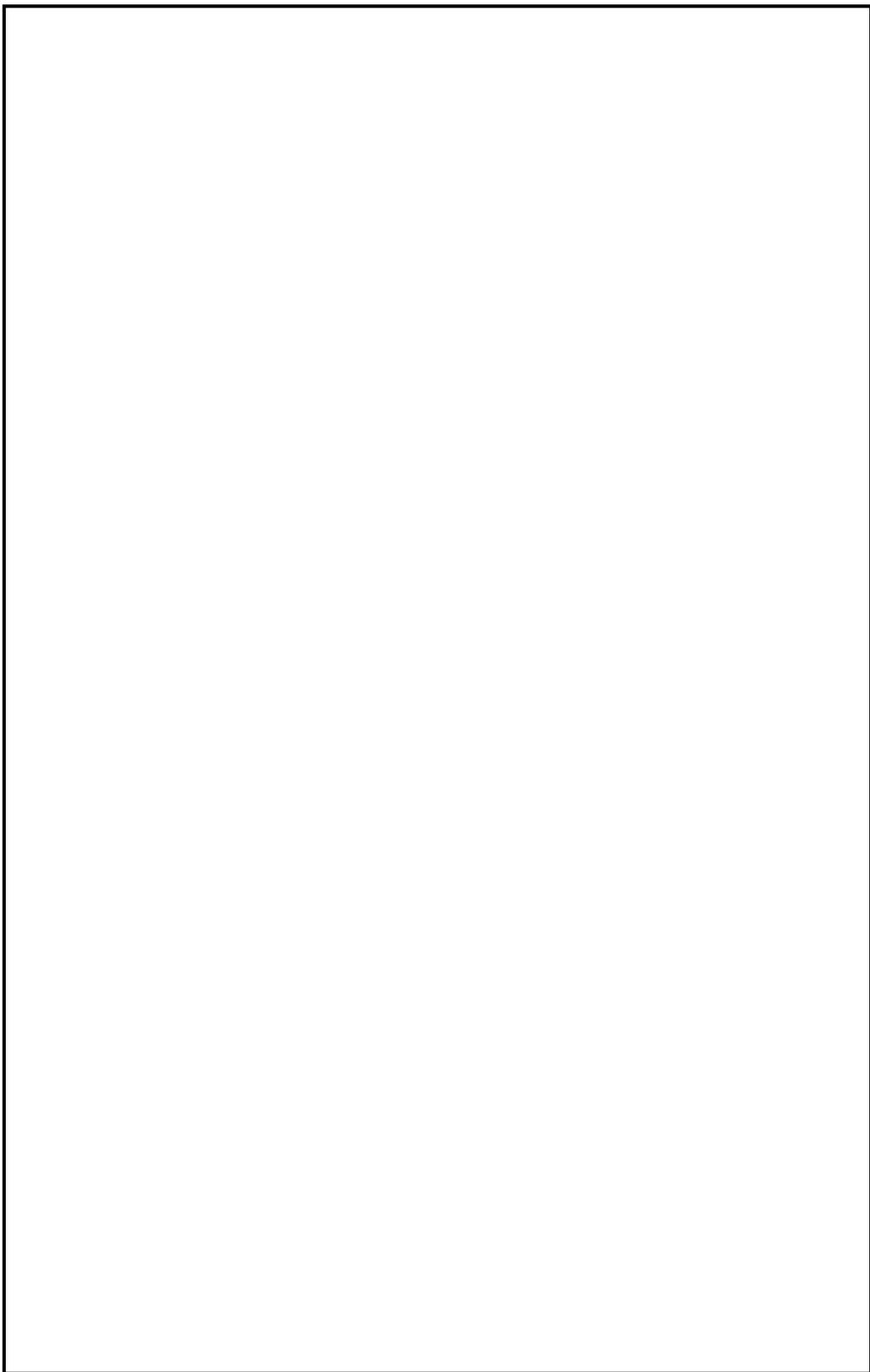
Revised 2017

Larry E. Ford

All Rights Reserved

Scriptures in this work are quoted from the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted. The author changes terms like “thee,” “thou,” “thine,” and other 17th Century expressions to more modern terms.

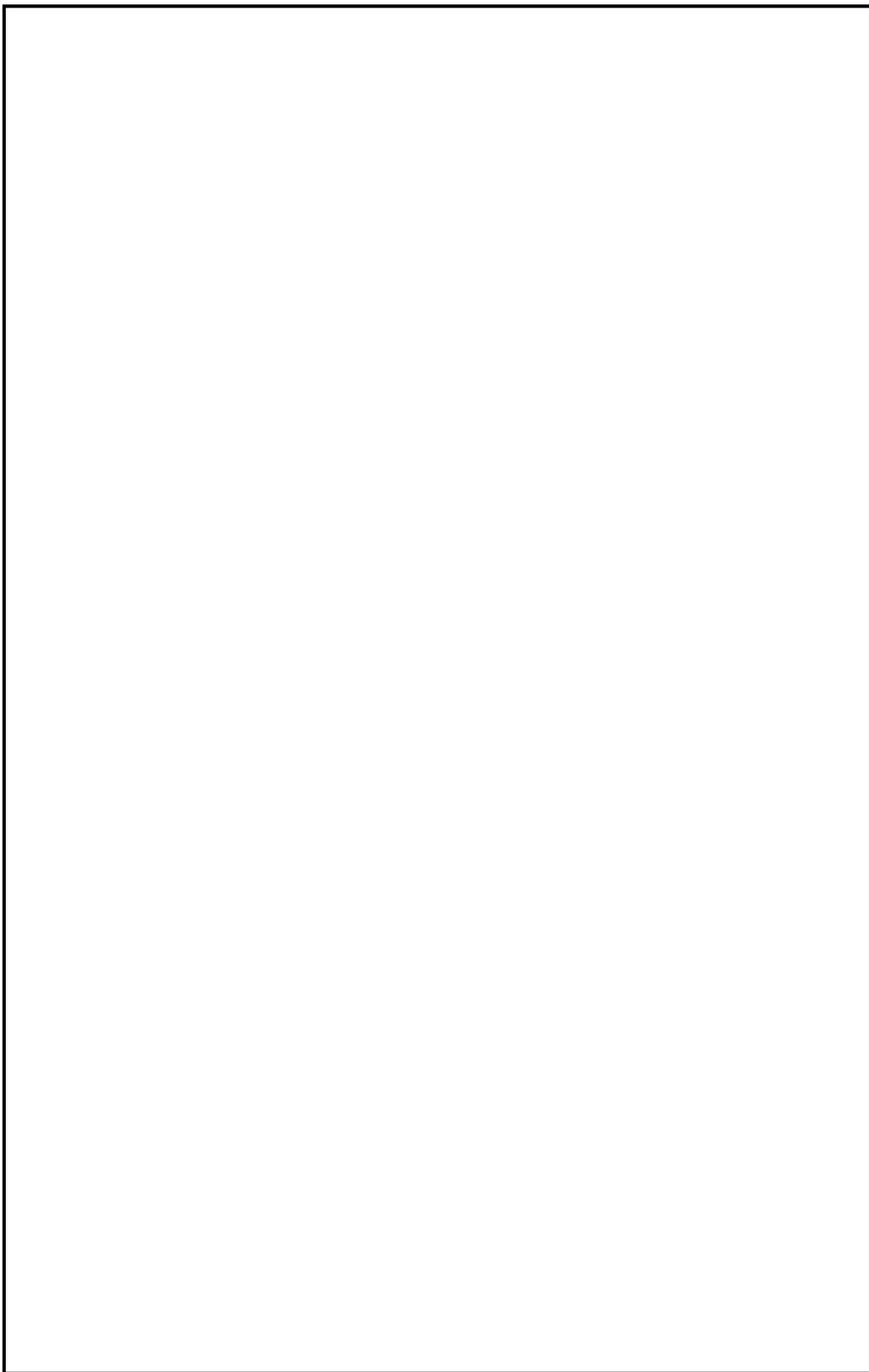
Unless otherwise stated, all definitions for Greek terms are from the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (University of Chicago Press, 1957; abbreviated as *BAG* in text). All definitions for Hebrew terms are from the Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1999 – reprinted from the 1906 edition by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston; abbreviated as *BDB* in text).



Scriptural Admonitions

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3, 14)



Introduction

We in The Seventh Day Christian Assembly do not question the existence of the True God. We readily teach that “...without faith [in the True God’s existence] it is impossible to please Him; for he that comes to God must believe that He exists, and rewards them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6; emphasis added).

The Apostle Paul says: “...*That which may be known of [the True] God is manifest [to mankind];* for [the True] God has shown it to them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by the things that are made,* even His eternal power and Godhead; so that [mankind is] without excuse [if they ignore the True God’s proof]” (Rom. 1:19, 20; emphasis added).

Paul, in fact, is not saying that mankind does not believe in one sort of “God” or another. On the contrary! Mankind has amassed to themselves numerous “Gods” that are nothing more than the products of their own perverted concepts of what “God” really is and does. They worship all manner of “Gods” that are nothing more than the creations of man’s heart, mind, and hands (Rom. 1:23-25).

Interestingly enough, many attempt to justify the existence of such “Gods” by associating them with the God of the Bible and using the Bible’s descriptions and words when speaking of them (see especially Matthew 7:21-23; 24:4, 5). The result of such an approach, according to Paul, is that mankind has: (a) suppressed the True God’s proof of His existence through their unrighteousness (v. 18), (b) failed to acknowledge the True God when they knew Him (v. 21), and (c) worshiped the creature rather than the Creator (vv. 23-25). It would be reasonable to ask why such a condition should exist in the face of such great proof!

Our approach in this lesson is not to convince you of the existence of one “God” or another. Mankind generally accepts that premise – whether or not they worship the True God. Our

question to you is this: Who or what is the *True* God? We ask this for one simple reason: ***“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain”*** (Exodus 20:7; emphasis added). That commandment from the True God makes it necessary for the individual to not only believe in His existence, but to believe in the True God as He has revealed Himself – not according to the vain imaginations of mankind.

Read the following scriptures for some useful insight into this concept: 2 Chronicles 15:1-4; Jeremiah 10:1-16; John 17:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; and 1 John 5:20. Even among so-called “Christian” folk, it is common to believe that it does not matter so much about the technical aspects of religion, as long as “God” is being worshiped

We will explore the fallacy of such thinking in the face of the existence of 32,000+ “Christian” denominations, along with the existence of the "Gods" of several hundred other religions. It should be readily apparent to the thinking person that in such a collection of religious thoughts there are involved many different concepts about who/what “God” is and what “God” is up to regarding mankind and creation. These concepts conflict with and contradict one another; so, the inevitable question looms large: Which religious concepts and which “God” are the correct ones? They cannot all be the truth. If not, which one is? Would the True God leave us in the dark about such an important piece of knowledge?

Such is the objective of this lesson. We will deal with the biblical definition of “God,” as well as the difference between God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. You will learn how the concepts of monotheism and Trinitarianism have clouded the understanding of otherwise well-meaning seekers of God’s truth.

This is a basic primer in understanding the Bible’s explanation of how the True God has revealed Himself to mankind. Keep in the back of your mind as you study through this lesson that: (a) there are pretenders out there – regardless of what our multi-cultural, politically-correct world would have us think and believe (read 2 Peter 2 and Jude); (b) they will use

Jesus Christ's name and teachings to try to validate their false teachings (read 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 13-15 and Galatians 1:6-19); and (c) there is a deceptive, adversarial spirit loose who makes it his business to cloud your understanding in order to keep you from understanding God's truth (read 2 Corinthians 4:1-4 and Revelation 12:9).

Before we begin, you must understand that the lesson is presented from the viewpoint of the Holy Bible because the "God" it represents has had a unique way of revealing Himself to mankind – and has revealed a unique claim not only to have created all that exists, including mankind, but to have had a very special plan to adopt mankind into His spirit-composed family for eternity! This plan includes many things that are in no way duplicated by the "gods" that are worshiped by many, many other human societies – from the most primitive to the most advanced.

It is our prayer that you will sincerely seek the True God and ask for His spirit of understanding as you study these most important lessons. Take this instruction seriously and *learn* more about the God of the Bible from it.

In Christ's Service,

Larry E. Ford, Pastor

The Seventh Day Christian Assembly. Inc.

(a non-Adventist Organization)

4929 Ga. Hwy. 33 South

Doerun, GA 31744

tsdca@hughes.net

Table of Contents

1. “Gods” and “Lords”	1
2. Understanding “Elohim”	20
3. How the Trinitarian Concept Came Into Traditional Christianity	32
4. Christian “Dogma” About “God”	42
5. What is the “Holy Spirit”?	51
6. “Elohim” is an <i>Expanding</i> Family	66

Lesson One

“Gods” and “Lords”

How would you explain “God”? What kinds of attributes does He have? Does He reveal Himself to humanity? If so, in what ways? If not, why not? What are mankind’s responsibilities toward this “God”? How do we even know that there exists any such thing as “God”? And, how do you satisfactorily prove any or all of this to yourself ... or to anyone else?

There are many questions that we can and must ask ourselves about who/what “God” is – especially if “God” is involved with mankind and has any plans for him beyond this present existence. So, the objective of this lesson is to help you to get a grasp on who/what “God” is. Please take notes and answer on paper all of the questions at the end of each lesson.

“Gods Many and Lords Many”

In 1 Corinthians 8:5, Paul admits that there are many “gods” and “lords” worshiped by the people of the world. A dictionary will generally define “god” as being a supreme reality, especially the Being responsible for creating and ruling the universe. But, it can also mean any being or object that is believed to have supernatural attributes and powers that require man’s worship. Would you expect all of these “gods” and “lords” to lead their worshipers to the same reward and to be consistent in the “truth” that all should seek after? Or, would they have different, competing paths? Was Paul even suggesting that such “gods” and “lords” *actually* exist?

If they do, then they exist only in the imaginations of those humans who have ignored the True God’s evidence of His existence and power. What do I mean by that? In Romans 1:18-

32, Paul lays out his argument that mankind in general has suppressed God's truth by their vain imaginations and foolish minds. They have done this by corrupting the revelation of God's existence as set forth in His creation. Foolish, vain mankind has constructed "God" in the image of "birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (v. 23). In doing this, they have "changed the truth of God into a lie" (v. 25). In essence, mankind has suspended their *disbelief* and accepted *imaginary* "gods" and "lords" as their concept of "true gods."

Hebrews 11:6 teaches that there are two beliefs that are necessary for one to have faith in the True God: (1) You must first believe that He exists and (2) that He rewards those who *diligently* seek Him. *Diligence* speaks of careful, persevering work ... working hard to accomplish your objective.

Can you make this discovery with a *lackadaisical* approach of regretful, low, spiritless interest? Not according to Hebrews 11:6. Is this a suggestion that the search for the True God's existence is merely a search for any "God" that you can *imagine* ... or is it a search for one particular Being who truly exists, reveals Himself in His creation, and forms relationships with mankind? Think long and hard about that.

How many of these so-called "gods" and "lords" are worthy of the worship of mankind? First Corinthians 8:4-6 gives us important information about this. Paul asserts that there is only one God (the Father) and one Lord (Jesus Christ). These two Divine Beings exist even though man acts as though there are numerous "gods" and "lords" in heaven and on earth. In the face of the "political correctness" of his day, Paul asserts that the imaginary "gods" and "lords" do not exist at all! Our pursuit at this point is how to know when and how there came to be a "Father God" and a "Lord God." This is instructive to the seeker of God's truth. Let's do due diligence in searching out His truth.

"In the Beginning..."

If you want to truly understand this, then it is important to go back to the most distant "beginning" you can find in scripture. I will take you back in a progression that is revealed

in both Old and New Testaments. From this revelation, you should be able to understand who “God” is as far as the Bible is concerned. This information may not at all fit the “picture” of “God” that you have been taught.

Let me assure you that you will be alright as long as you follow what is revealed. The principles upon which I can assure you of this are simple: (1) God’s word is truth (John 17:17) and (2) God’s word will set you free from man’s unscriptural traditions (John 8:31, 32). According to Romans 1:18-25 and 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, to which “God” are we to give our worship and faith? Begin to think of reasons why this would be true. Write them down for later reference as you learn more.

Why should we be indebted to the “God” to whom Paul refers? Notice Paul’s answer in verse 6:

Still for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we exist; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist.” (*Jerusalem Bible*).

Here, Paul says that we exist for this “God” known as “the Father.” Why? Did He create mankind for a special reason? Notice also that all things come from Him. If that is true, is there any other “God” who is responsible for any part or parcel of the entirety of creation? Pay close attention to the details.

Read Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (emphases added). In the very first verse of the Bible, it is made clear that someone known as Elohim (the Hebrew term from which “God” is translated into English) is responsible for creation. Because of traditions in Christianity, the assumption is that Elohim is a single God-being who manifests Himself in three different “faces”: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is called the “triune God.”

We are going to search the Bible for “proof” so we can understand whether or not Elohim is such a “God.” This is biblical history from the point that Elohim’s creation took place. Is this the “most distant “beginning”? Before we do that, let’s

search through this part of scripture to see how “God” and “Lord” fit into the “picture” of this history.

What does Paul say about “lords” in the last part of 1 Corinthians 8:6? What is Paul’s point here? Notice that there is a fundamental difference between God, the “Father,” and Jesus Christ, the “Lord”: All things, even mankind, come through Jesus Christ, the “Lord.” Apparently, He is the agent through whom they were created for the Father’s purposes. This is a very special role for this one known as the “Lord.” Does this mean that Jesus Christ is a “God”? Or, is that just a “face” that “God” assumes when He plays the “Son/Lord” role?

What is a “lord” (Greek = kurios)? We can refer to a reputable Greek/English lexicon (for example: *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich*) to get the intended meaning of the Greek term kurios:

- (a) an owner of possessions;
- (b) one who has full control of something;
- (c) a designation of God, especially as it relates to Jesus Christ; and,
- (d) any person or supernatural being of high position.

Why is this explanation important? The Hebrew term Elohim is plural. Some believe that the term is the use of a singular term that is pluralized in order to express a superlative like “strongest of the strong” or “mightiest of the mighty.” Why? Because they approach a discussion like this convinced that “God” is a single Being who plays three roles (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as He interacts with mankind. It is interesting that you can find in scripture where the Father and Jesus Christ are referred to as being “God.” *But ... you cannot find a single scripture where the Holy Spirit is referred to as being “God.”*

Elohim is what is called a *collective noun*. A collective noun is used to name a plurality that can operate as individuals within a group or as a single unit. Words like *group, family, team, squad, class, et cetera* are collective nouns. If you say: “The class

did their homework,” then it means that they had different assignments as individuals within the class. If you say: “The class did its homework,” then it means that they all had the same assignment to complete. The first example works as individuals; the second example works as a group. In Genesis 1:1, Elohim worked as a single unit in the creation of the heavens and earth. Can we find an example where they did not do so?

Genesis 2:4 and following takes an interesting turn as far as who does what. It does this by the designation of the Lord God. At this point, you can see that this section changes from Elohim to Yahweh Elohim. Notice that v. 4 gives the Lord God credit for doing the actual creation. He is even credited with having created Adam from the dust of the earth (v. 7). You do not see that there is a “Father” God mentioned at this point. That will be explained later.

We find another “beginning” in John 1:1-3. Here, there is a slight change in the identification. You have a character known as the Word and one who is known as God. Some teach that the term Word refers to the things that God says. They point to the verses in Genesis 1 where Elohim spoke and things came into existence (3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 26, 29). If you do not have a good background in scripture and language, then you can be at a disadvantage in understanding this seeming problem. How do we sort it out?

Pay close attention to v. 1: The Word is a “God” who accompanied another Divine Being who also is a “God.” How can you prove that they are distinct, individual Divine Beings as opposed to being one-and-the-same Being? Surely the Bible would not let such a mystery go unknown among God’s people!

Pay attention to the expression “with God.” Remember your English classes and when you studied the parts of speech known as prepositions. In your dictionary, look up the meaning of with. Write down a basic, working definition. In verses 1 and 2, the expression “was with” means that the Word associated with another Being known as “God.” This means that He is a companion or a partner to this other Being. Pay attention to this because we will go through many proofs in scripture to establish

the truth of this matter. It is very important information for correctly defining the term “God.”

We can go back to Isaiah 9:6, 7 to get a “nugget” of information. Isaiah prophesies the birth of Jesus Christ. Notice in v. 6 that the “government [over God’s creation] will be placed upon His shoulders.” Notice that He will sit upon David’s throne and bring lasting order to it with judgment and justice. He is called the Prince of Peace, among other things. The last thing it says is interesting: “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Read John 1:3 and see if you can tell which one of these two Beings was responsible for creating all that exists. Does it appear by this scripture that the Word is the agent through whom the Father carries out His plans and work? Take time to seriously ponder this question – you are seeking God’s truth about the matter. This is part of the mind-set that you must develop in order to have meaningful Bible study.

If I go to Hebrews 1:1-3, can I find a specific scripture that confirms the claim in John 1:3? Read Colossians 1:1-16. Does it speak of Jesus Christ? Does it differentiate between the Father and Jesus Christ? Can you find any statement there that Jesus Christ was the actual creator ... in effect, confirming again Hebrews 1:1-3 and John 1:3? Would that show Him being the agent of God in a subservient position: that is, carrying out the will of the Father God?

John 1:14 is the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6a. We also have more possibilities for the differentiation between “Father” and “Lord” in vv. 12-14: (1) Jesus Christ gave men the power to become “the sons of God”; and (2) His birth into the flesh is credited to His Divine Partner: “begotten of the Father.” Another interesting statement is made in v. 18: “No man has seen God [the Father] at any time; the only begotten Son [Jesus Christ], which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.” What is declared here is that Jesus Christ came to reveal the existence of His Divine Partner. This birth of the Lord Jesus Christ indicates a differentiation between Him and the one known as “the Father.”

With this information at hand, I want you to read some scriptures to see if you can understand them without my

commentary. I will use these scriptures throughout the entire study: John 5:39-47; 6:36-65; 10:30; and 17:5, 11, 17-26.

The Most Distant “Beginning”

Now we turn to the most distant “beginning” in order to bring some closure to this argument. We will begin with Ephesians 1:4. Make note of Paul’s use of the expression “before the foundation of the world.” That is clearly a reference to something that occurred before the creation of the heavens and earth (Gen. 1:1). From v. 4 to v. 14, Paul discusses a plan that was conceived before the creation of the orderly universe ... a plan to create “us” and bring “us” into the God Family (Elohim) through Jesus Christ.

If we look at 1 Peter 1:18-20, we can see how the Word came to have the title “the Christ.” Verses 18, 19 discuss His role as a future sacrifice for “salvation” and as a “redeemer.” This was done before the creation of the orderly universe (v. 20). Verse 20 says that this was “foreordained” for a later “manifestation.”

From Ephesians 1:4-14 and 1 Peter 1:18-20, we should be able to derive the idea that these Divine Partners were not one-and-the-same Being. They were separate, individual personages who worked in unity (John 10:30) to conceive of a plan to multiply their “kind” in the creation process (see Gen. 1:26-28). Before we go away from this part of the discussion, let’s consider another integral part of this most distant “beginning”.

Philippians 2:5-11 is an essential reference to this most distant beginning. Paul prefaces this account by identifying the object of the discussion: Jesus Christ. He is encouraging his readers to have the same kind of “mind” in them that Jesus Christ had in this event in the most distant beginning. What was that “mind” in Him?

Notice in v. 6 where Paul speaks of Jesus Christ having been “in the form of God.” Does this mean that Jesus Christ was originally the “one true God”? No. The Greek term for being is huparchein, which shows that Jesus Christ was essentially, unalterably, and inalienably “God.” That was His form (Greek =

morphe) ... the essential form that never alters and of which He cannot be deprived.

That definition is the same in v. 7 where He is shown taking the *form* of a servant. Paul adds this comment in order to clarify his statement: “equal with God.” His point is simple: This Divine Being who became Jesus Christ was originally the equal to His Divine Partner, but He gave up that equality in order to become a servant and a redeeming sacrifice.

It is little wonder then, that God sent an angel to tell Joseph that Mary was pregnant by divine cause and that two names would apply to the coming Son: (a) JESUS (the Latin form of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which means “the help of Jah, or Savior) – God’s helper, and (b) EMMANUEL (“God with us”; Matthew 1:18-23).

The term *robbery* (Greek = *harpagmos*; *KJV*) is the only place in the New Testament where this term is used. Being God’s *equal* simply means that the Word was all that God was. There was no distinguishable difference between the two. Paul says that Jesus Christ (the Word) was not concerned with that relationship being equated to *robbery*. He did not minimize His Divine Partner in the least by being equal to Him. He had that status by right – and He did not hug it jealously to His breast and refuse to let it go. He gave up the *equality* of His divinity in order to become a servant in human form. This tells us that God and the Word are not one-and-the-same Being.

Read John 5:8-27. There are two great points in this section of scripture that clarify what Paul is saying. Jesus has healed a lame man during the Sabbath. The Jews are upset that He would do such a thing; so, they came to accuse Him of *doing away with the Sabbath* ... not merely transgressing it. The term *broken* (Greek = *luo*) in v. 18 is defined as: “destroying; bringing to an end; abolishing; doing away with” (*BAG*; p. 485). In Matthew 5:17, He declares that He did *not* come to abolish either the Law or the Prophets, but to cause them to bring about what they were intended to bring about (read Isa. 55:10, 11).

When Jesus says that He and His Father work together (v. 17), they accuse Him of claiming *equality* with God ... not being the *same personage* as the Father. He refutes that accusation in

vv. 19-47 ... concluding that Moses wrote of Him: The Lord God (*Yahweh Elohim*). *That claim should not go unnoticed.*

In vv. 19-27, Jesus lays out His argument that He is *subservient* to the Father (see also John 14:28) in the ways in which they work together. Go through these verses and list the things that demonstrate that (ex.: v. 21: Father raises the dead to life; the Son also raises the dead to life).

Most interesting among these things is found in v. 26: “As the Father has life in Himself [that is: *self*-sustaining life]; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” *Self-sustaining life* means that it is not dependent on any other source for its power to exist. This one scripture definitively demonstrates the individuality of God the Father and the Lord God, Jesus Christ.

I also call your attention to Exodus 3:14, where Moses has inquired of the Lord God what His name is. The Lord God tells him: “I AM THAT I AM.” This name is mysterious and leaves many commentators with less than satisfactory understanding. I have found Matthew Henry’s explanation quite revealing relative to our present discussion:

[I AM THAT I AM] explains his name *Jehovah* [*Yahweh Elohim*], and signifies, (1) That he is self-existent; he has his being of himself, and has no dependence upon any other. Being self-existent, he cannot but be self-sufficient, and therefore all-sufficient, and the inexhaustible fountain of being and bliss. (2) That he is eternal and unchangeable. (3) That we cannot by searching find him out (Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House; 1982; p. 75).

Yahweh Elohim [I AM THAT I AM] is the one who became *Jesus Christ*. What does He mean in John in 5:26 that the Father gave “the Son to have life in Himself”? Did He not have it before He became Jesus Christ? That’s the reason I cite Exodus 3:14 – it verifies that Jesus makes such a claim in John 17:5 when, in His prayer to the Father before His crucifixion, He

reminds the Father of the “glory I had with you *before the world was*” (emphases added).

He *divested* Himself of that kind of life when He became flesh and dwelt among mankind. But ... Paul reveals in Romans 1:4 that that kind of life was *restored* to Him when the Father resurrected Him from the dead three days and three nights after His crucifixion (see the process in 1 Cor. 15:51-54). Thus it is that the Father gave “the Son to have life in Himself.”

Let’s go back to Philippians 2:7. Paul shows that the Word *voluntarily* divested Himself of His equal status with His Divine Partner in order to become the human Jesus Christ. He was not forced to do so. It was a selfless decision – probably related to what we have read in Ephesians 1:4-14 and 1 Peter 1:18-20.

Verse 8 says that He assumed the *morphe* (the essential form that never alters) of a servant (see Matt. 10:24). However, His “likeness of men” was not His *morphe*; it was His *schema*: “the essential nature that can and does change.” From birth to death, His human *schema* was constantly changing ... but His *morphe* (“God with us”) did not. When He was resurrected, He re-assumed His divine *morphe* in the form of self-existent life. In that life, He forever remains the Servant.

Make note of vv. 9-11. Here is the greatest piece of scriptural understanding that you can have about this matter. Because of the voluntary decision made by Jesus Christ before the creation of the orderly universe, His Divine Partner conferred upon Him a “name which is above every name” (v. 9). All things in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth now become subject to Him. This is the point during that unmeasured period before the creation of the heavens and earth that the Word was given the title The *Lord* God (*Yahweh Elohim*; v. 11) because it is indicative of His role in this plan that Elohim conceived before anything was created. What does that mean?

In Colossians 1:12-20, there are various supporting factors to be found in this discussion. First, true believers are to be moved from “darkness” to “light” by being transferred into the kingdom over which the Son will be King of kings and Lord of lords (vv. 12, 13). In making us capable of being partakers of this great honor, we will have been rescued from sin and death by being

bought back through His redemptive sacrifice on the cross and totally forgiven of our sins against God (v. 14; see 1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

Verses 15, 16 show that He has been given the rank of the *firstborn* Son of God. What does that mean? Contrary to what some believe, it does not mean that the Word was a *created* being; therefore, not “God” at all. This is explained by Paul in Acts 26:19-23. Verses 22, 23 are the most important verses in this discussion. Paul shows that Moses and the Prophets made a very significant announcement in their writings: *Jesus Christ would be the first human being ever to be resurrected from the dead into eternal, self-existent life.* This is consistent with Jesus Christ’s claim in John 3:13 that “*no man* has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven” (emphases added). *That statement even eliminates the possibility that Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven by God!*

Verses 15, 16 show three important supporting facts: (1) All things in heaven and on earth were created *by* Him and *for* Him (be reminded of John 1:3); (2) He existed before anything in heaven and on earth was created; and (3) His power (Greek = *sunistano*) brought all things into existence and sustains and perpetuates them by holding them together as an eternally functioning entity. That is the meaning of the comment in v. 17 that He sustains and causes everything to endure through the ages. Paul repeats this idea in Hebrews 1:2, 3 (“upholding all things by the power of His word” – *KJV*).

Take a look at Job 38 where the Lord God asks Job how the earth was placed in space and set upon its “foundations” (vv. 4-6). He moves from there to how the seas on the earth were established within boundaries – having been “born” out of thick clouds (vv. 8-11). Read the rest of Job 38 and 39 in order to get a grasp of this comment in Colossians 1:17. Simply put: He performed mechanical engineering miracles and set the heavens (the vast, increasing universe) and the earth to operate *forever* according to His plan. *That* is the strength of His power as Creator and Sustainer of all things.

Finally, vv. 18, 19 reveal to us that God the Father gave to Him all of the power of the godhead so He could administer and manage the creation from the beginning to its ultimate, eternal purpose for existing. That is the strength of Jesus' statement in Matthew 28:18: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

When He divested Himself of His divine equality with His Divine Partner, the Father made Him the CEO of the plan revealed in Ephesians 1:4-14. Paul reveals the epitome of this power in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 – pay close attention to vv. 27, 28: (1) God the Father was not made subject to Him, and (2) Jesus Christ will turn over that executive power to the Father when He has completed the duties that were assigned to Him under that CEO position. *What a powerful revelation!*

Are God the Father and God the Son Two Separate Beings?

In this section, we are going to go through the scriptural process of “proving” whether or not God (the Father) and Jesus Christ (the Lord) one and the same Being. Many think they can take all that we have discussed above and still believe that “God” is a single Being who manifests Himself in three different “faces”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We will use the approach revealed in Isaiah 28:10 (*KJV*): “precept upon precept ... line upon line ... here a little, and there a little.” Being able to sort this out is a skill not possessed by many (see 1 Cor. 1:26-31). You now have an opportunity to learn how to do this effectively and improve your knowledge and understanding of God's thoughts and ways.

Daniel 7:13, 14 is an example of the Old Testament breaking its silence about that difference. Notice how v. 13 describes that “one like the Son of man” came before one called “the Ancient of Days.” To be frank, this is not a schizophrenic about to converse with himself! This prophecy demonstrates a clear picture of one Divine Being traveling in time and space to visit another Divine Being. The “Son of man” is not a human who can travel on “clouds” to get from one place in the universe to another. This is

a unique description, embedded in a prophecy for the future, of two Divine Beings ... however distant that time might be (see Isa. 45:21 and keep in mind Phil. 2:9-11).

How shall we use this information? Read Colossians 1:12, 13 and ask: Who has given us an inheritance in the Kingdom of His Son? Are you able, in any manner whatsoever, to derive an answer from Daniel 7:13, 14? Now read Revelation 14:14-20. Do you find any information similar to Daniel 7:13, 14? In Revelation 14:15, 17, 18, who is sending these messengers to this “Son of man” on the cloud to inform Him of actions He is to take? Are you forming a picture of how the prophecy in Daniel 7:13, 14 is being fulfilled after so long a span of time?

Now let’s refer to Matthew 24:29-51. First, I want you to scan all of the verses and figure out how many times the expression “Son of man” is used. See if you can find *five times*. Now, ask yourself to whom these five expressions refer. Who is expected to return to set up the Kingdom of God (read 1 Thes. 4:13-18)? So, it is possible to make a scriptural connection between the “Son of man” and Jesus Christ. How do we further demonstrate His individuality from the Father’s?

That brings up Matthew 24:36 relative to the messengers we see in Revelation 14:14-20. Jesus Christ plainly says that He and the angels *do not know* the day and hour that He will effect the “reaping” of the “wheat” toward the end of the coming Tribulation period (v. 29). Can you derive any explanation for this statement from Revelation 14:15, 17, and 18? Do you suppose that those messenger angels will come out of the Temple, from the presence of God the Father seated on His throne, to tell Jesus Christ that it is time to carry out the fulfillment of His prophecy in Matthew 24:29-51? Does the description of this in Matthew and Revelation give you even the slightest indication that the Father and the Son are not one-and-the-same Being?

What does Paul mean in Colossians 1:15 that the Son is the “image” of the invisible God (in this context, the Father)? The Greek term is *eikon*. The Anglicized form is *icon*. Most computer-savvy people understand the term *icon*. It is a representation of something – just like the *eikons* on money represent something.

Read Hebrews 1:1-3. Does this agree? You have probably heard someone say of a child: “S/he is the spitting image of her/his mother/father.” This is actually a corruption of the expression “spit and image.” What is meant by this expression?

It simply means that the son/daughter bears a remarkable similarity to the father/mother. Pay close attention to this: John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12 say that *no one at any time has seen God* (meaning, in those contexts, the Father). But Jesus, the *eikon* of the Father, has declared Him to us – which suggests that, up to that point in time, the Father was not a known entity. The *eikon* corresponds to the original – but it is not, in itself, the original.

Paul uses the same term in 2 Corinthians 4:4. He says in 1 Corinthians 15:49 that “...we shall bear the *eikon* of the heavenly.” That means that we, although we are separate beings, shall also bear a remarkable similarity to God the Father once we have been changed from flesh to spirit and have joined the *Elohim Family* (read the rest of this chapter to get the idea Paul is discussing).

Now read John 14:1-14. In this scripture, Jesus discusses with His disciples some salient points of understanding: (a) v. 6: the only access to the Father is through Jesus Christ; (b) vv. 7-9: any who have known Jesus have known the Father and have seen Him; (c) vv. 10-11: Jesus and the Father intimately share the same characteristics. You should be able to see how this will carry over to those who follow Christ once they share the *eikon* of God (v. 20; see also 1 John 3:1, 2). How does this information help you to understand John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12?

Let’s use this information to infer the *unknown* from the *known*. With whom did Abraham eat and fellowship in Genesis 18? Did he *see* this Being? With whom did Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the 70 elders of Israel eat and fellowship in Exodus 24:1-11? Did they *see* this Being? Was this Being “God,” or the “Lord”? How do you know? Get accustomed to asking questions for understanding.

Some say that the reason this Being did not harm them is because they did not see Him in His *full triune glory*. Apply John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12 to Exodus 33:11, 18-23. The comments in John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12 do not state in which form, nor to

what intensity of His form, the Father has never been seen. He has never been seen at any time in any form – in whole or in part.

Now we come to John 10:30 – keeping in mind John 17:11, 21-23. If you are paying attention to the details, you can tell if the “Lord” and “God” are one and the same Being. It can be somewhat tricky if you do not pay attention to detail! In John 10:30, Jesus says that He and the Father are “one.” The term “one” is translated from the Greek term *eis* (pronounced *hice*). What does this mean?

Carefully consider the meaning of the term *one*. This is a crucial point in learning the definition of “God” because of the very popular concept called Trinitarianism – the concept that says there is only one “God” (monotheism) who plays the roles of three different personages or personalities (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Again, we refer to the Greek/English lexicon.

A quick word about using a lexicon: Each word is given definitions that are appropriate for the contexts in which they are used. *Eis* is used as either a preposition (with about nine definitions and numerous contexts) or a numerical designation of “one” (with about five definitions and numerous contexts).

They are treated as two separate words by the lexicon. In John 10:30, *eis* is not a preposition; if it were, it would generally mean “in, into, toward, or to a place.” It would make no sense for Jesus to say “I and my Father are ‘in, into, toward, or to a place’.” The term *eis* in John 10:30 and 17:11, 21-23 is the numeric designation of *one* – but the exact meaning must be considered within the context in which it is used.

Under the first meaning (“in contrast to more than one”), a secondary definition is this: “in contrast to the parts, of which a whole is made up” (*BAG*; pp. 229, 230). *Contrast* means that there are at least two things that are being compared by *differences*. So, while there are many individual parts, all of the parts make up a larger entity. Matthew 19:5 (from Genesis 2:24) is given as an example: “they two shall be *one* flesh.” Note that two separate beings do something that causes them to be *eis*. A man and his wife become *eis* by their *union* as man and wife. The lexicon says that John 10:30 must be understood in this

context ... that is, in the context of unity, not sameness as a single individual. None of the other definitions or contexts apply in that manner.

Then it cites the following for more examples (read these and take good notes): Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 6:16; 12:12, 20; Ephesians 2:14, 15; Galatians 3:28; 1 John 5:8. None of these references means “one-and-the-same.” They all describe a unity of spirit (thought and purpose). Why not cite 1 John 5:7?

Here’s a good lesson in what is called the “transmission of the text.” First John 5:7 is not proof of the Trinity because it is a spurious (that is, false or not genuine) scripture. Consider the following quote from *The Interpreter’s Bible* about how the original text was transmitted from one generation to another by manuscript copyists:

This verse...appears in no ancient Greek MS nor is it cited by any Greek father; of all the versions only the Latin contained it, and even this in none of its most ancient sources. The earliest MSS of the Vulg[ate] do not have it. As Dodd (*Johannine Epistles*, p. 127n) reminds us, “It is first quoted as a part of I John by Priscillian, the Spanish heretic, who died in 385, and it gradually made its way into MSS of the *Latin Vulgate* until it was accepted as part of the authorized Latin text”....The mention in the true text (v. 8) of the three witnesses which agree naturally led to an interpretation along trinitarian lines, and this occasioned the present gloss which appears in various forms in MSS and quotations from the fifth century [A.D.] on” (v. 12, pp. 293, 294; 1957; emphases added).

A gloss is an explanatory note that someone puts in the margin of a manuscript that eventually mistakenly or purposely becomes included in the text of the manuscript. It is not part of the original text, but, once included in the text, it comes to be considered as though it is original. The gloss is generally a reflection of the belief structure of the copyist, not necessarily the teaching of the original writer of the text. Based on this

information, how do you understand Jesus' statement in John 10:30? Would you say that He and the Father are one-and-the-same Being? Or, are they two who are united? On which factors would you base your argument?

According to *BAG*, "one-and-the-same" is another definition of the numerical designation eis, but it is not in the context of the usage here. Eis, in this context, means that the Father and Jesus Christ have a special union: Although they are two separate beings, they are one, or united, in will and purpose. This is similar to the motto of the United States: "e pluribus unum" – "one out of many." Would this idea fit the concept of a trinitarian "God" – that is, one "God" playing three different roles? Not in the sense intended by eis in this context.

Read John 17:24-26. Did the Lord and the Father know one another before the Lord became flesh (v. 24 and v. 5)? Do you get the impression that Jesus Christ is praying to Himself? Would that make sense to you? It is important that you learn to analyze the text and use appropriate reference sources. Such skills will add measurable value to your study of God's truth. If you do not have reliable reference books, consider buying some for your personal library.

Then there is the next question that needs to be answered plainly: Had the world known the Father before Jesus revealed Him (v. 25)? This is clarified in Matthew 11:27 ... especially the last part (see also Luke 10:22). Do you think that Jesus' disciples comprehended that the Father and Jesus Christ were separate beings? From what you have read, can you explain this concept adequately?

It should be clear by now that the "God" of the Bible is presently composed of at least two members: the Father (God), and Jesus Christ, the Lord (God). They are not one-and-the-same Being, but they are united in thought, will, and purpose. In effect, you have been shown that the doctrine of the Trinity is not supported by scripture. It gives us a false "image" of "God" (Elohim). You should be able to understand this concept based on having studied the scriptural account of what I call "the most distant 'beginning'" and related scriptures.

Review Questions

1. In Hebrews 11:6, which two beliefs are necessary for one to have faith in “God”?
2. What is expected of the person who wants to discover “God”? Can it be done *lackadaisically*? Explain.
3. How would you explain the difference between Exodus 20:1-7 and 1 Corinthians 8:5?
4. How many so-called “gods” and “lords” are worthy of mankind’s worship? Why?
5. Why are we indebted to the God to whom Paul refers? (see v. 6) Hint: Out of all the “gods” and lords” worshipped by mankind, what makes God, the Father and Jesus Christ, the Lord so special?
6. Explain the fundamental difference between God, the Father and Jesus Christ, the Lord.
7. Based on what you have studied thus far, are the Father and the Lord one-and-the-same Being? How can you use John 1:1-3, 14, Philippians 2:5-11, and Colossians 1:12-20 to explain your answer? In what way does the preposition *with* have any significance in the matter?
8. Explain what John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12 mean relative to Exodus 24:1-11 and 33:11, 18-23. Did Moses and the others *see* the *Lord* God’s *glory* in Exodus 24:1-11?
9. Knowing what you know now, does Exodus 33:18-23 say that Moses saw the *Father*? How do Matthew 11:27, Luke 10:22, and John 17:5, 24 help you to better answer the question?
10. Explain John 10:30. How are God and Jesus Christ *one*?

11. Explain what a *gloss* is. How can *glosses* change the meaning of scripture? Use 1 John 5:7 as an example.

12. With reference to John 17:24-26, what clues can you find that will tell you whether or not Jesus' disciples comprehended the difference between the Father and the Christ.

13. Are Christians (who have the gift of the Holy Spirit) and God and Christ *one*? Use Genesis 2:24 and 1 Corinthians 6:16 to explain how this is possible.

14. What is meant by the expression *transmission of the text*? Why is this knowledge important for studying the Bible?

Lesson Two

Understanding “Elohim”

Genesis 1:1 says that “God” created the heavens and the earth. The English term “God” is translated from the Hebrew term *elohiym*. Understanding *elohiym* is important in understanding the “God” revealed to us in the Bible. We will use the capitalized anglicized form *Elohim* because *elohiym* is also used in a variety of ways that have to do with “divine appointees,” rather than “God” Himself.

Let me make this point more interesting with a couple of Old Testament examples. Exodus 4 is about the Lord God’s selection of Moses to tell Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go free. Moses balked at having to speak to the Pharaoh; so, the Lord God appointed his brother Aaron to be the spokesperson. But ... the Lord God told Moses in v. 16 that *he* would be “God” (*elohim*) to Aaron – “a divine appointee.” Read Exodus 7:1. The Lord God appointed Moses to be *elohim* to Pharaoh and Aaron – “a divine appointee.” Jesus uses the same term from Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34, 35. It is broadly understood that the Judges of Israel were referred to as *elohim*. We are going to understand more fully how this term is applied in scripture.

Elohim is recognized as a plural noun because of the *-im* ending. It is what we would more properly call a *collective noun* – a noun that names a plurality. For example: family, club, team, class, and group are collective nouns. The singular form of *elohim* is *el*, or *eloah*. Now notice how this plurality is generally interpreted.

Two representative references are provided. Adam Clarke, in his eight-volume commentary (that took him almost 40 years to write, have published, and submitted for public consumption in 1826), says the following:

“The original word Elohim [from Genesis 1:1], God, is certainly the plural form of El, or Eloah, and has long been supposed, by the most eminently [sic] learned and pious men, to imply a plurality of Persons in the divine nature. As this plurality appears in so many parts of the sacred writings to be confined to three Persons, hence the doctrine of the Trinity, which has formed a part of the creed of all those who have been deemed sound in the faith, from the earliest stages of Christianity. The verb *bara*, ‘he created,’ being joined in the singular number with this plural noun, has been considered as pointing out the unity of the divine Persons in this work of creation. In the ever-blessed Trinity, from the infinite and indivisible unity of the Persons, there can be but one will, one purpose, and one infinite and uncontrollable energy” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary: One-Volume Edition*, Baker Book House, 1967, p. 16).

Clarke admits that *elohim* is a plural noun – the plural form of *el* or *eloah* – and that this Plurality acts in unison with “...one will, one purpose, and one infinite and uncontrollable energy.” But, does he speak contrary to scriptural revelation when he attributes this plurality to a *trinity* of persons revealed “...in so many parts of the sacred writings...”? Could it be that the majority of professing Christians have been led astray about who/what “God” is in this respect?

Before answering that question definitively, let’s look at a comment by Dr. C. I. Scofield in *The Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford Press, 1945 edition, p. 3). Dr. Scofield gives the following note for the term “God” in Genesis 1:1:

“Elohim (sometimes El or Elah), English form ‘God,’ the first of the three primary names of Deity, is a uni-plural noun [otherwise known as a collective noun] formed from El = strength, or the strong one, and Alah, to swear, to bind oneself by an oath, so implying faithfulness. This uni-plurality implied in the name is directly asserted in Genesis 1:26 (plurality), 27 (unity): see also Genesis

3:22. Thus the Trinity is latent in [the term] Elohim” (bold-faced emphasis added).

So, Scofield also admits that *elohim* is a plural noun – he calls it a uni-plural noun. What is implied in the term *uni-plural* is that the plurality acts in unison, that it is united in will and purpose.

This is consistent with one side of the definition of a collective noun: (a) If the members of the collective noun (family, church, team, etc.) act together – in unity – toward the same goal, you give their action a singular verb and singular pronouns (example: The *family* is going on its vacation.); (b) If the members of the collective noun act independently on individual goals, you give their actions a plural verb and plural pronouns (example: The *family* are going on *their* vacations.).

In the first example, you know by the context that they are acting together toward the same goal, that is, as one in unity. In the second example, you know they are acting independently toward their own individual goals. So, it is consistent with these rules for scripture to say: “And Elohim said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ...So Elohim created man in His own image, and in the image of Elohim created He him: male and female created He them.” Note the noun/pronoun usage with Elohim and us/our and His/He. Notice how mankind (plural; males and females) was referred to as him. Pluralities were given singular pronouns. This is the nature of the grammar rules regarding collective nouns.

How does this make the Trinity latent in the term elohim? Latent means “existing in hidden, dormant, or repressed form but usually capable of being evoked, expressed, or brought to light.” Ask yourself how a term referring to a divine plurality subsequently suggests a trinity. Is that reading it out of the context – or reading it into the context? How many Jewish scholars will tell you that the Trinity is latent in the Hebrew term elohim?

Beginning with Genesis 2:4, which term is used to describe the Creator? Notice that LORD is all capital letters. It is widely recognized that this name is Yahweh Elohim – what is called a

“personal name” of the Deity. It is likewise widely recognized that *Yahweh* is expressed by the same tetragrammaton (four letters) found in Deuteronomy 6:4 that expresses the personal name of God: YHWH (“Yahweh”). Some prefer to call Him “Jehovah.”

YHWH is the “self-existent One who *reveals Himself*.” It is apparent that God the Father did *not* choose to reveal Himself. YHWH is the “redemptive name” of Deity – expressed in seven compound names describing His redemptive relationship to mankind:

- (a) Yahweh-jireh: “the LORD will provide”;
- (b) Yahweh-rapha: “the LORD that heals”,
- (c) Yahweh-nissi: “the LORD our banner (victory)”;
- (d) Yahweh-shalom: “the LORD our peace”;
- (e) Yahweh-raah: “the LORD my shepherd”;
- (f) Yahweh-tsidkenu: “the LORD our righteousness”; and
- (g) Yahweh-shammah: “the LORD is present.”

This same Being calls Himself “I AM THAT I AM” in Exodus 3:14 – the same One with whom Abraham fellowshiped in Genesis 18 and with whom Moses and others ate in Exodus 24:1-11. All of these incidents were situations in which Yahweh Elohim *revealed* Himself. This presents no special problem to the Trinitarian monotheists because, to them, it is simply one of the roles that the one “God” plays. However, it is a problem if you pay attention to what the Bible actually reveals!

Pay Attention to Scriptural Clues

The doctrine of God taught by orthodox Christianity asserts that God is *one* in essence but *three* in “person” – that is, He is

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – a *single* entity who plays three roles. With the absence of the word “Trinity” and any explicit doctrine in any one place in scripture, this doctrine is an effort by mainstream Christianity to unite in one statement of faith all of the various descriptions of “God” in the Bible. It is based on Deuteronomy 6:4 (“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.”), which is described as the monotheistic credo (the belief in one God) supposedly found in both the Old and New Testaments.

They also use benedictions in which such expressions as: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” They assume that the three-fold benediction is absolute proof that “God” is *triune*. Second Corinthians 13:14 is not Paul’s declaration of any such thing.

In actual fact, the belief in one God was no problem until Jesus Christ came with powers and works that were above the natural realm. Look at John 3:2 for one example of many: “You are a teacher come *from* God.” Jesus made many claims that He was the *Son of God*. John 5 is a revealing discourse about the Father/Son relationship between Jesus Christ and the Father – read the entire chapter and take careful notes. There is a reason for taking those notes: You make a record of scriptural evidence.

In John 5:18, what does the term *equal* imply? “The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he ... said also that God was his Father, making himself *equal* with God” (emphases added). *Equal* means that something is of the same measure, quantity, value, quality, number, or degree as something else. That means that you must have at least *two* things in order to make such a comparison. Read John 14:28 for another comparison: “...my Father is *greater* than I.” What does this have to do with the point being made about the Jews’ claim?

In English – and many other languages – there are what is called *degrees of comparison* for adjectives and adverbs. In English, you begin with the base adjective or adverb (example: *great* – Tom is a great man). When you compare *two* things with regard to *greatness*, one can be *greater* than the other (example:

Tom is greater than Bob). This is called the *comparative degree*. It indicates a comparison of *two* things.

When you compare *three or more* things with regard to greatness, one can be the *greatest* of them all (example: Tom is the greatest player on his baseball team.). This is called the *superlative degree*.

You can tell if you are comparing two or more things by looking at the *-er* and *-est* endings. In some cases (with words having two or more syllables), you have to make the comparative degree by using *more* + the adjective or adverb and the superlative degree by using *most* + the adjective or adverb (example = *more* stupendous and *most* stupendous).

Speaking honestly and frankly, Jesus' comment in John 14:28 does not sound like a conversation about a single, triune God! In order for the Father to be *greater* than He, there must be two of them. It would be difficult to imagine that any single "face" in "Trinity" would be greater than either or both of the other two "faces." Jesus does not compare either Himself or the Father to the Holy Spirit. Why?

In Matthew 1:18-25, the angel's announcement to Mary of the coming birth of Jesus also presents a problem to the concept of *monotheism*. The angel tells her that the event will be the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Read Matthew 1:23 and note this appendage: "...Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Whether it is spelled "Immanuel" or "Emmanuel" is not significant. They are the same name.

This means one of two things: (a) either the one God had left His throne in heaven and become a human being – leaving the throne in heaven empty, or (b) there never really was only one God. Do you grasp the gravity of the problem presented here?

As noted above, there are several clues in Jesus' prayer in John 17 that He and the Father are *different* Beings. List them, paying special attention to verses 1-8. Any prayer that Jesus Christ addresses to the Father further complicates the matter – simply because it should be self-evident that He is not praying to Himself! If there is only one God, to whom is He praying?

What is your reaction to Hebrews 5:7? How would Jesus save Himself from death if He were a mere human being at the time (see Hebrews 2:16-18 and 4:15)? After all, Matthew 12:38-40 shows that He was dead and in the grave three days and three nights. If Jesus was truly human (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15; 1 Cor. 15:12-19), then His death would be exactly like it is described in Ecclesiastes 9:10 and Genesis 3:19. The dead have no awareness at all in death. They slowly begin to putrefy, decay, and return to the dust of the earth.

You can refer to Psalm 16:8-11 in order to understand this better. David says in v. 8 that he will not be “moved,” which indicates that David was firmly established in his faith and confidence in God thoughts and ways. Why? In v. 9, he expresses his full confidence that his “flesh” (that is: his condition as a human being) “shall dwell confidently in hope.” Hope of what?

Verse 10 is confusing to those who believe in the immortality of the soul – a subject we will take up in the third edition of this Bible Study series. The Hebrew term nephesh is translated into King James English as soul. Relative to mankind, this term is used first in Genesis 2:7 when the Lord God breathed the breath of life into Adam and he became a “living soul.” Nephesh has nothing to do with an immortal soul. It is defined as being vitality (the power to live and endure) and a breathing creature (even if it has died). According to Ezekiel 18:4, 20, a nephesh can and will die.

Our question, then, turns on David’s hope that he will not be left in the grave (hell is *KJV* English for “the grave”) when he dies. From there, he makes a major jump to prophecy by adding: “Neither will you allow your Holy One to see corruption” (emphases added). What does that mean? Simply this: The Holy One would not be allowed to putrefy, decay, and return to dust in the grave. It is this psalm that Peter uses in Acts 2:25-36 in reference to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Remember: Three days and three nights.

Read John 11 ... paying attention to vv. 14, 17, and 39. Lazarus had begun to decompose ... and Jesus Christ smelled the stench of that decomposition. David prophesied – and Peter verified – that Jesus Christ did not get to this stage in His tomb.

If you understand 1 Corinthians 15:46, 53 correctly, you will see that the nephesh stage of the human “journey” came first, not the spirit stage. In other words, those who claim that man is an immortal soul that is housed in a body of disposable flesh have it all wrong ... according to scripture. Verse 53 says that, whether we are alive or dead (see vv. 50-52), we must put on incorruption and immortality. If we must put on the capacity not to putrefy, decay, and return to our dust, then we do not already have that quality of life. If we must put on the capacity to never die again, then we do not already have that quality of life, either.

In our present condition, we can die, putrefy, decay, and become part of the natural landscape like any other nephesh. Genesis 3:22 says that the Lord God took away access to eternal life when Adam and Eve sinned. He did not create them with incorruption or immortality. So, ask yourself this question: Did the Father die on the cross and get buried without life of any kind for three days and three nights? Was the Father the one who was resurrected from the dead? Read Romans 1:1-4 again.

What other evidence can you find in John 16:23-32? Pay attention to the clues in vv. 16, 19, and 28. List them on your note paper. Then compare this to Mark 15:34. How does God forsake Himself – if there is only one “God” in existence? Are you yet able to grasp the way God has revealed to us in scripture this mystery about Elohim? It is a stunning revelation that is either not revealed to most, or it has been read over and ignored.

Let’s try another one for practice. Read Jesus’ instruction about prayer in Matthew 6:5-15. To whom should your prayers be addressed? Pay attention to what is called, by many in Christianity, the “Lord’s Prayer.” Jesus is on the earth at the time and will be there for at least one to two more years. He prays numerous times to one He calls “Father.” It should be obvious that He is not praying to Himself.

All of this information should enable you to understand what John intends by his statement in John 1:18 – noting especially the expressions: “No man has seen God at any time...” and “...the only begotten Son... has declared Him”? Does this indicate that the Father had been unknown up to that time?

In John 5:37, according to Jesus, the Father had never been seen or heard. Some would refer to Matthew 3:16, 17 and Mark 1:9-11 and say that the people heard the voice of God the Father in this case. If so, that in itself would confirm that they are not one and the same Being because Jesus was in the water and the voice came from heaven. They are observing Jesus' baptism, but hearing God's voice from heaven. But, if you read the text correctly, along with John 1:32-34, you will see that Jesus was the only one who saw the Spirit descending *and* heard the voice. John the Baptist only saw the Spirit descend like a dove.

Notice John 5:26: "For as the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself." Is this evidence of two separate Beings who each have self-sustaining life? Self-sustaining life does not depend on any outside source to perpetuate it or control it. This is the very essence and definition of eternal life. We know that Jesus Christ received eternal life when He was resurrected from the grave, but did He have that eternal life as a separate God-being before He came in the flesh as a human baby? Read John 17:5 again.

Read Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32. If you were one and the same Being – manifesting yourself as three "persons" – could you keep a secret from yourself? How long has such a clue been in scripture? This matter about the individuality of the Father and Jesus Christ was argued for several hundred years before the trinitarian compromise was made. That compromise did not include any discussion about the role of the Holy Spirit for a few more hundred years

Riddle me this: Who is the only one who knows when Jesus Christ will return? Be sure to pay attention to the clue "...my Father only." One might well suppose that a Divine Schizophrenic might have multiple personalities that keep secrets from one another, but we are not dealing with a Divine Schizophrenic. One would correctly question why the "early Church fathers" missed these glaring clues to the nature of the God of the Bible!

Finally, read 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. To whom will Jesus Christ deliver up the Kingdom? When? What was "put under the feet" of Jesus Christ (see also Matthew 28:18 and Philippians

2:9-11)? What was the one exception? Why? To whom will Jesus Christ subject Himself when He has completed His assigned task? How do you become subject to yourself? It is the height of folly and absurdity to think that a three-in-one God could hide important information from Himself!

Conclusion

Do you understand the value of being inquisitive about what scripture says? It is not enough to have doctrines and traditions for centuries (see Matt. 15:1-9). They can be wrong ... even though they are constructed and maintained as acceptable religious practice for centuries. Matthew 7:21-23 demonstrates that all manner of religious doctrines and practices can be counted as *worthless* if they are not done according to the will of God the Father. It is necessary, therefore, that we learn God's truth ... as opposed to man's traditions (John 4:23, 24; 8:31, 32).

More and more, it is becoming evident that there is one *Elohim* – that is, one God-family – but not one *El* or *Eloah*. Only in that sense can you practice monotheism – because the only “God” that exists is *Elohim*! Understanding *Elohim* is a problem for the typical monotheist.

Jesus never fought with His Eternal Companion for divine superiority, nor did He resent Their equality. But...He subjected Himself to His Companion in order to carry out their planned creative venture. Nor did His Companion feel any resentment at all about Their equality. First John 4:8 reveals that “God is love,” which means that both the Lord and the Father are love ... so, they do not have it in their characters to hate or envy or resent one another in any way whatsoever.

As a result of Jesus' sacrifice of His divine status – in regard to equality, as well as temporarily becoming flesh so He could die (that is, become absolutely lifeless) – His Companion temporarily surrendered to Him all power in heaven and on earth so Jesus could accomplish the great task of reconciling all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth to the Father. Once that is accomplished, Jesus will again subject Himself to

the Father (see 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Again, how do you subject yourself to yourself?

Review Questions

1. In Genesis 2, which term is used to identify *Yahweh Elohim*?
2. In the New Testament, who did this *Yahweh Elohim* become?
3. In John 5:18, what does the term *equal* imply? How does that claim compare to what is said in John 14:28? What does this tell you about the “Triune God” concept?
4. In Matthew 1:18-25, who is to be named “Emmanuel”? What does that name mean? What does the second name mean?
5. What clues do you find in John 17 that Jesus and God the Father are two separate individuals? List them.
6. Compare John 16:23-32 to Mark 15:34. What do you discover about the difference between the Father and Jesus Christ in this situation?
7. What clues do the prayers of Jesus Christ give you about John 10:30 and 14:28?
8. How can you use scriptural clues to explain the idea that the Father was *unknown* until Jesus Christ came to reveal Him?
9. Explain how Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 refute the concept of the “triune” God.
10. Give a working definition of *self-sustaining life*. What does John 5:26 exemplify the separate, individual identities of the Father and Jesus Christ?

11. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 to Philippians 2:9-11, Colossians 2:19, and Matthew 28:18. Explain how and why all things were “put under the feet” of Jesus Christ.

12. Explain the term *nephesh*.

13. What does the term *nephesh* reveal about the Lord God’s statement in Genesis 3:19?

14. How do *degrees of comparison* help you understand John 14:28? Focus on the word *greater*.

15. Explain what Paul means in 1 Corinthians 15:53 when he says that we must “put on” incorruption and immortality. Does that indicate that we do not already have it?

16. If you use the last part of Genesis 3:22 relative to 1 Corinthians 15:53, how would you explain the false nature of the doctrine that man either is, or has, an immortal soul that goes immediately to heaven or hell when the body dies?

17. Using the same two verses and 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, explain how the human Jesus Christ actually *died* for our sins. You can also use Matthew 12:38-40, Ecclesiastes 9:10, Psalm 16:8-11, John 11, and 1Corinthians 15:46 in your explanation.

Lesson Three

How the Trinitarian Concept Came into Traditional Christianity

One would assume that those who consider themselves to be “Bible believers” (which implies that they believe in the inspiration of the contents and the inerrancy of the message of the Bible) would believe that the Bible is sufficient within itself to reveal the nature of “God” without importing into it concepts from other religions. It is not uncommon to hear people declare “If it is in the Bible, then I believe it heart and core.” Yet, you can find the very same people admitting into their belief structures things that have not come from biblical teachings.

When Jesus spoke the words in Matthew 4:4 (cited from Deuteronomy 8:3), and Paul wrote the words in 2 Timothy 3:16, the only scripture in existence was the *Old Testament*. Since then, the New Testament has been added to the “inspired word of God.” Yet, many of those same people believe that Jesus did away with large portions of God’s word, principally in the *Old Testament*, through His teachings and by virtue of His crucifixion. Compare Matthew 5:17-19 to Colossians 2:14 and ask yourself if these scriptures contradict one another. Many imply that they do. Most important: How could they?

Well, the Trinitarian concept is not *explicitly* or *implicitly* taught in the Bible – Old or New Testament. People might well find situations in scripture that they presume to use to support their Trinitarian ideas, but in so doing, they are reading such ideas *into* scripture, as opposed to reading them *out of* scripture. This, very plainly, is *adding* to scripture. This type of thing is warned against in Revelation 22:18: “If any man shall add unto

these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.”

Arguably, one could say that this applies only to the book of Revelation. But ... Deuteronomy 4:2 says:

You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you take away anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

This is succinctly repeated in Deuteronomy 12:32. Proverbs 30:5, 6 says:

Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found to be a liar.

Using God's word as it is written and intended to be understood can help you to identify those who do not speak on God's behalf (see the question posed in Deuteronomy 18:21). One should get the idea that God does not like people to give Him credit for things that He did not intend or inspire. God imposes upon us, with authoritative, compelling, and urgent admonition, that we do not import into His word or eliminate from His word anything that changes its intended meaning.

As you will see, the Trinitarian concept of “God” is man's *addition* to His revelation in holy scripture of the nature of *Elohim*, and it radically changes His revelation of Himself. The Trinitarian concept of “God” is ancient. It goes back to at least post-flood civilizations when the small population of the earth was recovering from the ravages of the destruction of the known creation of that time. It would seem that the survivors of that global destruction would have gotten the point about sin and its destructive nature, but such was not the case.

Josephus, a Jewish historian who wrote during the first century A.D., points out that they rebelled against God's instructions to spread out all over the world, but because they believed that they were responsible for their own prosperity,

they refused to do so. They believed that God was an adversarial spirit who wanted to disperse them so that He could destroy them (see Romans 1:18-32 and Exodus 14:10- 12; 16:1-3 for some comparisons).

One great leader among them, Nimrod (see Genesis 10:8, 9), is credited by Josephus with the following attitude:

[Nimrod] said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he [that is, Nimrod] would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! And that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers! Now the multitude were ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God (*Josephus: Complete Works*; Kregel Publications, 1960; p. 30; emphasis added).

You can read Genesis 11:1-9 for God's response. You can see in Genesis 10:10-14 that Nimrod was responsible for founding many of the great ancient cities like Babel, Accad, Assyria, and Nineveh – cities inextricably linked to some of the most abominable, pagan religions that God could ever passionately hate.

Pay close attention to this observation by Alexander Hislop in his phenomenal work *The Two Babylons* (Loizeaux Brothers; 1916; p. 12):

[The Babylonian] Mysteries were long shrouded in darkness....All who have paid the least attention to the literature of Greece, Egypt, Phenicia [sic], or Rome are aware of the place which the "Mysteries" occupied in these countries, and that, whatever circumstantial diversities there might be, in all essential respects these "Mysteries" in the different countries were the same....Babylon was the primal source from which all these systems flowed, so the deductions of the most learned historians, on mere historical grounds, have led to the same conclusion" [Here Hislop references

Herodotus and Diogenes Laertius, who were very ancient historians antecedent to him].

After pointing out how profuse the belief in one God was in the ancient world – even *pantheists* (“gods” everywhere) believed in one supreme God – he says this:

In the unity of that one Only God of the Babylonians, there were three persons, and to symbolise [sic] that doctrine of the Trinity, they employed ... the equilateral triangle (p. 16).

He asserts that the Babylonians had an image of the Triune God with three heads on one body (p. 17) and that such was similarly worshiped in ancient Assyria, Siberia, India, and Japan. He sums up by saying:

While overlaid with idolatry, the recognition of a Trinity was universal in the ancient nations of the world, proving how deep-rooted in the human race was the primeval doctrine on this subject.

Then, Hislop exposes his *misconception* of scripture by adding this: “...which comes out *so distinctly* in Genesis” (p. 18; emphases added) – and quotes for proof Genesis 48:15, 16. Hislop’s proof is found in Jacob’s mention of “God” twice and “Angel” once – you know: $2 + 1 = 3$. Hosea 12:3-5 expressly identifies the “Angel” with whom Jacob wrestled in Genesis 32:24-32 as being “God.” Hislop refers to this as a “three-fold invocation of the sacred name” (Ibid.). Is that really “proof”? Is it scriptural *truth*?

Frankly, this is poor scholarship in the face of all the other powerful information Hislop has offered. This does not “prove” a Trinitarian concept implicit in Jacob’s statement or scripture! He exposes his wrong-headed thinking in another footnote:

Some have said that the *plural form* of the name of God, in the Hebrew in Genesis, affords *no argument* for the

doctrine of the plurality of persons in the Godhead [that is, one God who plays three roles], because the same word in the plural is applied to heathen divinities. But if the supreme divinity in almost all ancient heathen nations was triune, *the futility of this objection must be manifest*” (p. 17; emphases added).

In effect, he argues that the Babylonian trinity was wrong only because it was overlaid with idolatry, not that it was wrong in its essential nature. *It is wrong because Elohim has not revealed themselves to be a single God with three faces.* He also betrays an ignorance of scripture by saying the following:

The triune emblem of the supreme Assyrian divinity shows clearly what had been the original patriarchal faith. First, there is the head of the old man; next, there is the zero, or circle, for “the seed” [see Gen. 3:15]; and lastly, the wings and tail of the bird or dove; showing, though blasphemously, the unity of Father, Seed, or Son, and Holy Ghost (p. 19; emphases added).

First of all, this emblem does not clearly show anything about the original patriarchal faith. Further, it was his contention that this had been the original way in which most, if not all, of pagan idolatry had represented a Triune God. Elohim was not their God! However, he goes to great pains in his work to demonstrate that this trinity was based on three separate persons: Nimrod, his wife Semiramis, and, supposedly, their son Horus – who was regarded as the reincarnation of Nimrod through a miraculous birth on the night of December 24.

Nimrod, who was dead and had become, supposedly, the Sun, was believed to have impregnated Semiramis with a single beam of sunlight and, thereby, to have brought about the reincarnation of himself in Horus. Hislop admits that “the three persons had come to be, the Eternal Father, the Spirit of God incarnate in a human mother, and a Divine Son, the fruit of that incarnation” (Ibid; emphases added).

Hislop asserts that this concept of a triune God was adopted from Babylon, either directly or indirectly, by nations all over the world. It became the standard by which nation after nation interpreted “God.” It did not matter if it was cast in the guise of three separate beings, or if it was one being who manifested himself in three different modes, or faces (look up the term *hypostasis* in a reputable encyclopedia or exhaustive dictionary).

It even affected the theology of Israel – apart from God’s revelation – as they mixed and mingled with and adopted various religious concepts from their pagan neighbors. Likewise, Hislop refers to the “shema” of Deuteronomy 6:4 to support the Trinitarian “Unity of the Godhead” concept: “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.” But, does this, indeed, reveal any such triune unity?

Let’s look at a literal translation of the Hebrew as given in *The Interpreter’s Bible* (v. 2, p. 372):

The Hebrew here is *somewhat enigmatic* as the various possible translations in the RSV mg. [that is, margin] indicate [the possible translations are: (a) The Lord our God is one Lord; (b) The Lord our God, the Lord is one; (c) The Lord is our God, the Lord is one; (d) The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.]. It consists of four words: ‘Yahweh, our God [that is, *Elohim*], Yahweh, One.’ The essential meaning, however, is clear, even though the exact English translation is not. The object of Israel’s exclusive attention, affection, and worship (cf. vs. 5) is *not diffuse but single*. It is not a pantheon of gods, each of whose personalities has a disconcerting way of being split up by rival adherents and sanctuaries, so that the attention of the worshiper cannot be concentrated. Israel’s attention is [to be] undivided; it is confined to one definite being whose name is Yahweh (rendered THE LORD by KJV and RSV). The word *one* is thus used in contradistinction to “many,” but also implies *uniqueness* and *difference* (emphases added).

Did you detect any nuanced reference to a Trinitarian concept in that quote? No, it had to do with singleness of devotion to the God revealed in scripture – and one as opposed to many. Now, pay close attention to this comment by Alvin Boyd Kuhn, author of *Who Is This King of Glory?* (Academy Press; 1944; p. 312), as he cites information from Benjamin Bacon, a Yale theologian, in relationship to:

The vital changes in early Christianity ... to the effect that it has been credibly estimated that Christianity lost one half of its following to Marcion and other Gnostic “heretics” bent on divorcing it from its Jewish affiliations and making it over in the true likeness of a Hellenistic Mystery cult of personal redemption. [G. R. S.] Mead asserts, too, that the great Marcionite movement had cut Christianity entirely apart from Judaism. Valentinus tried with some modest success to harmonize the two elements. This datum as to the Marcionite invasion into the ranks of Christianity must be considered a fairly true estimate. [Baron von] Mosheim also says that Origen “had introduced the Academy” – Orphic-Platonic esotericism – entire into the fabric of Christian theology. Augustine a little later came from sitting at the feet of Plotinus, and, previously tinged with Manichaeism, introduced the Plotinic-Platonic doctrine of the “three fundamental hypostases” into Christianity as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (emphases added).

Indeed! Notice from where all of this additional theology is coming! Is it coming from God’s revelation in scripture? No. Is it coming straight out of Babylonian-inspired paganism? Yes – it began in Babylon and was adopted by other nations, directly or indirectly, and given local “flavors” to make it their very own.

What makes this such a terrible thing? It is well documented and understood that such syncretization has occurred. It is no secret. *It just is not well understood why this is such a terrible thing – especially in our present politically-correct, multi-cultural world.* Augustine claimed that Socrates, who antedated Christ

by 500 years, was as grand a *Christian* as any he had ever known – and that *the pagan brand of Christianity* was as lofty and pure a type of it as the kind he knew.

He received the “Christian” doctrine of the Trinity from a rank pagan philosopher, Plotinus. Plato went to Egypt to learn about it from the Orphic and Eleusinian Mystery religions – which adopted it straight from the Chaldean Mystery religion of ancient Babylon.

Here is another timely quote from Kuhn – who, by the way, was not a Christian and abhorred traditional Christianity as a pagan fake:

The Arian-Athanasian controversy and the so-called “filioque dispute” ... was over the question whether the third person of the Trinity was produced from the Father alone or from the Father “and from the Son,” – “filioque” in Latin. Had not Egyptian allegorism been held in scorn and contempt and already forgotten, the beetle symbolism held the answer for the disputants all the time (Ibid; p. 448).

Would it surprise you to learn that the three Magi, who anticipated the coming of the Christ-child and adored Him upon His arrival, are considered in paganism to be symbolically representative of the “Three Kings of evolving consciousness (Mind-Soul-Spirit), *the ineffable trinity of divine life inherent in mankind*”? It might surprise you to what extent the Trinitarian concept has been used to explain God and man – outside of scriptural revelation by God.

One final word about the adoption of the pagan trinitarian concept into traditional Christianity. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1969 edition; vol. 22; article “Trinity”; p. 241) asserts that neither the word *Trinity* nor the explicit doctrine appears in any one place in the Bible. This suggests that you can go to several places and eventually put together enough to *presume* that such a doctrine exists in scripture. But the author of the article admits that:

Most Christian theologians have found it *impossible* to say what the Bible says about the nature of God without resorting to something like the orthodox dogma of the Trinity” (emphasis added).

All of this information, however brief it is, should provide you with enough information to at least question the trinitarian doctrine of “God.” If we are warned by God to not add or subtract from His word, then our search for His truth must be limited to what He has revealed there ... not “borrowed” from pagan sources. In that regard, Deuteronomy 12:29-32 must be read and understood by all who seek to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23, 24). We must understand that there are still “imposters” among us who preach *another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit* (2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15). It is not enough to do things in God’s name (Matt. 7:21-23). When we construct religious “traditions,” we must guard against changing God’s truth into a lie (Rom. 1:25) and voiding God’s commands by making man’s traditions appear to be His commandments (Matt. 15:1-9).

Review Questions

1. Explain the importance of Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4.
2. Have the growth and development of traditional Christian doctrines “hewed the line” of those two commandments? Why/why not?
3. Show examples of how there have been additions and subtractions to God’s word. Use any examples you might already know about (like *Easter* and whether Good *Friday afternoon* to sunrise *Sunday morning* constitutes 3 days and 3 nights in the grave – Matt. 12:38-40).

4. What do you think the Lord God is emphasizing in Deuteronomy 29:16-29? About what is He warning Israel? Do you think that such a warning has any application to you today?

5. Read Exodus 34:11-17. Why does the Lord God abhor (hate; detest) the gods of the pagans?

6. Compare this to Deuteronomy 12:29-32. What does the Lord God say about imitating the religious practices of the heathens?

7. Read Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8, and James 1:17. If the Lord God came in the flesh as Jesus Christ, has He changed His mind about these things He inspired for scripture (2 Tim. 3:16)? Did anything change about His word just because He was crucified?

8. Why does the Lord God consider the pagan religious concepts to be a snare/trap?

9. Do you see any pagan religious practices mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:9-14 that are common among us today? Are there any that are very casually accepted or tolerated by the so-called “Christian” world today? You can consider movies, literature, religion, and television in your answer. Examples: *Wiccans, Harry Potter, Samantha, zombies.*

10. Read Deuteronomy 7:16-26. Does the Lord God expect His people to have the same *disgust* and *loathing* for pagan religious practices that He has? Why should He? (Consider Lev. 19:2.)

11. Do you have to be wary of those who would lead you astray in the name of Jesus Christ? Read Matthew 7:21-23; 24:4, 5, 24-28; and 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

12. Should the existence of 32,000+ different competing “Christian” denominations concern you at all in that regard? Who is right? Who is wrong? Are you prepared to make such a judgment? If so, by what means?

Lesson Four

Christian “Dogma” about “God”

Encyclopedia Britannica (1969 edition; vol. 7; p. 553) says that “Christian” theology declares the following about dogma:

[It] is a doctrine set down in the deposit of divine revelation and authoritatively defined by the entire church as a truth to be believed and accepted by all orthodox Christians. ...In this strict sense, it could be maintained that there are only two truly universal dogmas: the doctrine of the Trinity (*q.v.*) and the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ (*q.v.*), as these were formulated by the ecumenical councils of the early church (emphases added).

Who decides what goes into this “deposit of revelation”? How about explicit formulation in the Bible? What does this mean regarding worshiping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23, 24)?

Understanding the Nature of Dogma

So, it is a fact of history that dogma does not have to be clearly stated or shown in scripture. Only two are universally accepted. Notice also this statement from *Britannica*:

Although a dogma, by definition, must be contained in the deposit of revelation, this does not necessarily mean that it must be explicitly formulated in the Bible (Ibid; emphases added).

Orthodox theologians understand very well that something like the trinitarian concept of “God” is not found in any specific

passages of scripture. The “evidence” on which they base their conclusion about its “truth” is the *implication* of thought and language found in a so-called “deposit of divine revelation.” The problem with many of the so-called “settled” theological concepts that are afoot today is that they were formulated out of numerous *sectarian arguments* about the nature of God and the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that were “settled” by compromise ... each sect getting a little concession here or there, but not their total and steadfast belief. Generally speaking, that is how the “deposit of revelation” was collected.

Such a thing is fine for business and politics, but not when you are supposedly using God’s revelation of His thoughts and ways (scripture: John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Isa. 55:8, 9) to demonstrate why the *True Church* of the living God is “the pillar and ground of *truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15; John 8:31, 32).

Make note of this information from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magisterium>:

The **magisterium** of the Catholic Church is the church's authority or office to establish its own authentic teachings. That authority is vested uniquely in the pope and the bishops, under the premise that they are in communion with the correct and true teachings of the faith. Sacred scripture and sacred tradition "make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church", and the magisterium is not independent of this, since "all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is derived from this single deposit of faith."

The above statement is, in and of itself, *dogma* in that it has been formulated by the *Catholic Church* that *it* is the sole possessor of “the correct and true teachings of the faith.” They claim to be the “Mother of all churches.” *Britannica* lays it out in their definition of “dogma” that: “[It] is a doctrine *set down in the deposit of divine revelation and authoritatively defined by the entire church as a truth to be believed and accepted by all orthodox Christians*” (Ibid; emphases added).

How is the authority given *uniquely* to the pope and bishops to call for “councils” made up of numerous differing opinions among other “Christian” churches and work out an acceptable *compromise* that will satisfy at least some of the differences among them? Doesn’t that amount to *syncretism*? If they are all led by the same Holy Spirit, then there should no longer remain differences among them.

The ultimate objective of dogma should be to put the true believer in a position to worship God in spirit and in *truth* (John 4:23, 24). Please excuse my skepticism, but the existence of 32,000+ “Christian” denominations, with varying and opposing beliefs and practices, *are not in spiritual unity* (Eph. 4:1-16) and *do not demonstrate a universal Christianity that fits Paul’s description of the Church of the true and living God*. Altogether, they do not represent the *unified* “body of Christ.”

You cannot even point to the doctrine of the Trinity as a *unifying* factor because that doctrine is not *universally* held. It also does not settle the question about the “person of Jesus” because, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:4, there are those who preach *another Jesus* than the one preached by the Apostles as revealed in scripture and His ministry among them. And ... how does “Holy Spirit” that is emanated from the Father and the Son equal a separate “person” in the Trinity?

In a less strict sense, dogma also can be a belief commonly held by a majority of the members of an individual church group or denomination. There are various “Pentecostal” congregations who believe very sincerely in making “snake handling” and “poison drinking” a part of their regular worship services. Such belief is narrowly based on Mark 16:15 ... so, to them it is “scripturally based.” There is a problem with this that is shown in translations other than the *King James Version*.

For example: The *Revised Standard Version* and *Modern Language Version* do not include Mark 16:9-20 in their translations because some of the most ancient authorities did not agree to its authenticity. Ending with v. 8 causes chapter 16 to bring Mark’s gospel to an inexplicable, abrupt end. Many theological scholars and authorities have researched the matter and concluded that it is *insoluble* at present. Some translators

prefer to “err on the side of caution” in such matters and exclude those verses – usually footnoting an explanation. Note this conclusion posited in *The Interpreter’s Bible’s* exegesis of Mark 16:8:

One of the oldest attempts to supplement and finish Mark is the so-called “longer ending” (vss. 9-20). This is not found in the best manuscripts ... and dates probably from the second century; it is compiled out of the data of the other Gospels, and even Acts, and may have been an originally independent list of resurrection appearances. The author was probably, as Burkitt and Conybeare held, the second century presbyter Aristion, or Ariston. It is attributed to him in an Armenian MS written in 989 (vol. 7; p. 915; emphases added)

Would knowing this give you pause about participating in “snake handling” and “poison drinking” as an act of worship before God? Some have died from the bites of the venomous snakes they handled and the arsenic they have drunk. Some could argue that those thus deceased did not have true faith; so, they paid a heavy price for faithlessness. Is that practice actually a “temptation” of God (Matt. 4:7)? Such would be the danger of some aspects of dogma.

Another example of the use of dogma would be the belief that Jesus Christ was born on the night of December 24. There is no specific/explicit scriptural proof that the birth of Jesus Christ occurred on that date. In fact, biblically speaking, there is abundant evidence that He probably was born sometime between mid-September and mid-October. Instead, this “Christian” dogma is accepted as God’s truth because it came from some “deposit of revelation” outside of scripture.

So, the ultimate question becomes this: How can you avoid following false doctrine if the dogma is not supported explicitly by scripture in a direct statement or through a preponderance (superior in amount and power) of evidence? You have to understand what scripture teaches ... as opposed to what is traditionally taught by others. It is not true Christianity to

teach falsehoods in the name of Jesus Christ (Matt. 7:21-23). Matthew 15:1-9 shows that sacred *scripture* is one thing ... and sacred *tradition* can be something altogether different. We have to be vigilant in our search for God's truth.

Using Reference Resources

Reference sources are important for your search for "truth." However, you are not required to accept at "face value" what the reference sources teach ... because they might be following a generally accepted dogma or theological paradigm used for centuries. Prolonged use does not prove the truth of such dogma or paradigms.

Some resources merely state how a particular subject has been treated and add no additional commentary to the matter. It is left up to the reader how to use the information provided. In such cases, you should learn to be wise about what you accept and what you disregard.

Consider the variety of opinions that have been posited through the centuries since Jesus Christ ascended to the Father's right hand. I will use two examples to demonstrate this thought: *Adolf von Harnack*, a German Lutheran theologian and prominent church historian from 1879 to 1937, and *John Henry Newman*, an Anglican priest, poet, and theologian ... and later a Catholic cardinal, who was an important and controversial figure in the religious history of England from about 1835 to 1890. Both were noteworthy theologians of considerable stature.

Regarding dogma, Harnack described it as: "the work of the Hellenic spirit upon the Gospel soil" (*Britannica*; emphases added). Thus, he attributes the development of dogma to a class of Greek philosophical and/or religious reasoning. He showed in his influential, multi-volume work on *The History of Dogma* (1895) that Christianity had become mired in unnecessary and damaging creeds and dogmas – particularly those inherited from Greek philosophical and religious schools of thought that were "conditioned by the circumstances of their origin and therefore could not claim universal validity or authority." He credited the

Protestant Reformation with subjecting dogma to the Bible and, at least curtailing its further development (Ibid.).

Newman, on the other hand, argued that dogma was a refutation of the Protestant idea that the *scriptures* are “the sole authority in theology.” He sought to prove that dogma was part of the “organic” development of the original deposit of the faith and made possible answers for new questions that would arise from it – both inside and outside of the Church (Ibid.). *Britannica* subsequently poses a legitimate statement to which we should all pay attention: “...The solution to this problem depends upon one’s definition of the church and of its teaching function” (Ibid.). Newman, as a Catholic cardinal, relied heavily upon the Magisterium for his “truth” from the “deposit of the faith” and “sacred traditions.”

The challenge of heresy and the True Church’s own required theological positions compel us to seriously reflect upon the message of the Bible. From this reflection, we are able to understand that the dogmatic doctrine of the Trinity *did not spring up all at once in the church, but developed over a period of several centuries*. It was ultimately settled by a very crude compromise.

How do you analyze the above statement by *Britannica* in order to figure out whether or not you can accept it at “face value”? Indeed, my first question is simple: Who is the “church” that is being referenced? That is important because the “church” that was involved in the “reflection” and “development” of the dogma was essentially the Roman Catholic Church (“catholic” meaning “universal”) ... which claims to be the “Mother” of all churches. Is that *true*?

My second question is this: With the Bible in hand, why did it take several *centuries* to develop a dogma about the Trinity? Had not Jesus Christ been very specific about the nature of “God” during His ministry? Of course, we have already noted how various sects of “Christianity” met to settle the chasm of differences among their individual teachings ... through compromise. Is that true *unity of spirit*?

You can well imagine that over several *centuries* the debating “players” changed many, many times. Did each succeeding

generation of sectarian “players” make the same, consistent arguments as their forebears? These two questions alone indicate that we must be cautious about the information we are given in research resources. They imply that we must use the *scriptures* as our most reliable source of information concerning God’s truth. We can also accumulate a preponderance of evidence from scripture from which we can ascertain God’s will and truth, as well as from information found in credible reference sources. Such preponderance of evidence enables us to be in God’s “light.”

The next quote from *Britannica* explains Harnack’s claim and speaks volumes to us in this present matter:

“Initially, both the *requirements of monotheism* inherited from the Old Testament and *the implications of the need to interpret biblical teaching to Greco-Roman paganism* seemed to demand that the divine Christ as the Word or Logos be seen as subordinate to the Supreme Deity [which we have seen in other chapters in several scriptural references]. An alternative solution was to interpret Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three modes of self-disclosure of the one God, but not as distinct within the being of God itself” (vol. 22; p. 241; emphases added).

It was not until A.D. 325 that the first form of the present traditional Christian doctrine about the Trinity and other matters was formulated and accepted at Nicaea. *It was not formulated from the Old Testament or the specific teachings of Jesus Christ or His Apostles in the years succeeding His death.* It was the product of neo-Platonists like Origen and Augustine of Hippo – as well as earlier so-called “Christian” Gnostics whom Paul, Peter, and John had resisted as “...counterfeit apostles ... dishonest workers disguised as apostles of Christ...” (read 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 2:18-29 for examples).

An excellent example of the Gnostics is found in Simon Magus (see Acts 8:5-25). W. F. Albright shows that Simon Magus considered the Creator of the Old Testament to be a

malevolent angelic spirit. Simon considered himself to be “the great power of God” – and, he traveled with a prostitute, Helena, whom he found in a brothel in Tyre. The pair passed themselves off as God Almighty and the Holy Spirit – both incarnate (*The Anchor Bible: The Acts of the Apostles*; Doubleday and Company; 1967; pp. 305, 306).

So, Augustine used the platform of Greco-Roman paganism to introduce his Plotinic-Platonic concept of the Trinity, which Augustine considered to be a key both to the nature of God and to the nature of man and the world. He used the Trinity concept to explain that man is body, immortal soul, and spirit. In so doing, Augustine made a pervasive application of the Trinity concept to more things than God. The idea, apparently, was to put so-called “Christian” principles into language that the Greco-Roman pagans would understand – that is, he would take their own religious concepts and “Christianize” them.

Interestingly enough, Augustine still believed that the Holy Spirit came from both the Father and the Son (filioque), which suggests that it is not a separate *hypostasis*; rather, it would, of necessity, have to be considered as a force or power used by both to complete Their individual “works.”

This has been the short version of how the Trinity concept came into Traditional Christianity. There is a great deal of history you can study to get a more complete picture. Hopefully, this will provide you with a framework to use when reading into it with more depth. Just remember this principle: Although people use the Bible to support their religious ideas, that does not mean that the Bible itself *reveals* those ideas as those people interpret scripture. People use the Bible to try to prove many religious concepts that simply are not supportable by it.

Review Questions

1. Write a short explanation of the term dogma.
2. Is it possible to have dogma that is acceptable to God? Explain your answer.

3. On what should dogma be based in order for it to be acceptable for God's True Church? Include in your answer the concepts of: (a) explicit formulations in the Bible and (b) preponderance of evidence.
4. What is meant by the term sectarian?
5. Look up the definition of the terms abhor and abomination in an exhaustive dictionary. Do you understand from these definitions the reason for the depth of the hatred and disgust God has for pagan religious practices? Give a short explanation to support your answer.
6. What do you perceive is the difference between what the Lord God reveals and what the pagans believe?
7. What is the problem with having 32,000+ "Christian" denominations? Explain how such differences of beliefs and practices relates to Ephesians 4:1-16.
8. Deuteronomy 13 – What do you think God expects you to do with regard to those who come to you preaching in the name of Jesus Christ?
9. Are they permitted to lead you astray in the name of Jesus Christ? (See also Matthew 7:21-23; 24:4, 5, 24-28.)
10. One more for good measure: Read Jeremiah 10:1-16. Does the imagery in vv. 3, 4 remind you of a present-day practice involving evergreen trees? It was, in fact, a pagan idol representing Nimrod as the "giver of gifts" in its original form. Remember that he was supposedly reincarnated in his son Horus, who was born on the night of December 24.
11. What are "the signs of heaven"?
12. Is that very popular today? In what way?

13. What did you learn about Harnack's and Newman's attitudes about dogma? How are they different?

14. Do you know from where Christianity has derived the "original deposit of the faith"? Does Jude 3 provide a clue?

15. The "organic" development of the "original deposit of the faith" has to do with how man has systematized "the faith" into dogma, doctrine, and traditions from what they see written in and out of scripture. Based on what you have studied thus far, which personal, logical concerns arise in your mind about the general systemization of "Christian" and "church" theology? Use the "Trinity" concept and Ephesians 4:1-16 as a basis for your answer. Give this serious, thoughtful consideration.

16. From what you have studied thus far, can you put complete and utter confidence in the dogma about the "Trinity"? Why? Give reasons based on this study.

17. Explain the problems with interpreting biblical teachings to Greco-Roman paganism. Look up the term syncretism. Does it make sense to attempt to blend opposing, contradictory concepts into a dogma by compromise? Why/why not?

18. How has this study been helpful to you thus far?

Lesson Five

What is the “Holy Spirit”?

The Hebrew word for “spirit” (*ruach*) originally meant “breath; wind; spirit.” This is true whether it relates to the spirit of man or the spirit of God. That being the case, how shall we understand the expression *ruach yahweh* throughout the Old Testament and *pneuma hagion* throughout the New Testament?

It is plain that this *ruach* comes from *Yahweh*. Genesis 2:7 shows Him using it to put breath and life into Adam when He created him. Is *ruach yahweh* merely the breath of life? Or, is it some kind of *power* by which *Elohim* carries out their will among mankind?

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* defines it like this:

The *ruach yahweh* is a term for the historical ***creative action*** of the one God which, though it defies logical analysis, is always God’s action (VI, p. 367; bold-faced emphases added).

George Eldon Ladd writes:

The *ruach Yahweh* in the Old Testament is not a separate, distinct entity; *it is God’s power – the personal activity in God’s will* achieving a moral and religious object. God’s *ruach* is the source of all that is alive, of all physical life (*A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 287; emphases added).

S. MacLean Gilmour writes in *The Interpreter's Bible* concerning the Holy Spirit that filled Jesus Christ:

In the O. T. the *Spirit* is a sporadic and temporary influx of divine energy that enabled certain individuals to see visions, prophesy, or perform remarkable feats of strength (vol. 8, p. 83; emphases added).

From these few comments, we can derive a reasonable idea of what the "Holy Spirit" is: (a) creative action by God, (b) God's personal activity in achieving His moral and religious will, and (c) divine energy. We can correctly infer from these ideas that the "Holy Spirit" is not a "person" or "face" in a Triune God. It is God's divine power to effect and bring about whatever He wills (that is, whatever He wants to happen). This is what is given to the person who repents, accepts Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and is baptized (Acts 2:38). How does that actually work?

Job 32:8 speaks about there being a *spirit* in man. What is it? It is *mind power*. Man has a rational mind that is expandable by the influx of *knowledge* acquired through the five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Not all "knowledge" is acceptable to God (see Gen. 2:17). Hosea 4:6 openly speaks against the human mind that lacks *knowledge*, which is shown by *BDB* to refer to: "*discernment, understanding, wisdom ... in highest sense, knowledge of God (incl. obedience)*" (p. 395).

Job 32:8 also speaks of God's *inspiration* giving man understanding. This word *inspiration* means that God can put His own spirit into a human being – in other words, He can share His intellect with mankind. This is accomplished when God emanates His spirit in the direction of a particular human. We see this expressed in Romans 8:14-17 ("spirit" to "spirit" witnessing) and 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 (divine revelation).

To use a crude analogy, it is like a broadcast (radio) or telecast (television) signal. When a receiver is prepared and tuned in to the appropriate frequency, it receives the emanated signal from its source. The heart and mind that is prepared to receive God's emanation of His spirit can and will receive the spirit force of His thoughts and ways. This "broadcast" is

necessary for mankind to understand God's thoughts and ways (see Isaiah 55:8-11).

In the last part of Genesis 1:2, what "...moved upon the face of the waters"? For what purpose? Notice that the Spirit *moves* upon the face of the waters. This was not the Spirit "face" of a Triune God; it was God's *creative power and energy* setting about to accomplish God's (*Elohim's*) will in re-creating the face of the earth after the war God had fought with Lucifer and one-third of His angels (Isa. 14:12-15). Originally, it had been created perfect and habitable (Isa. 45:18; Job 38:1-7). Isaiah 55:11 speaks of God's word going out of His mouth to accomplish whatever He pleases (see also Matt. 5:17). This is the same idea.

We see this happening several times in Genesis 1. Where? Each time the scripture reads "And God said, "Let there be..." Read vv. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, and 24. The only exceptions are in vv. 26 and 29, which are prelude statements to *Yahweh Elohim* (the One who eventually became Jesus Christ (see John 1:1-3, 14 and Philippians 2:5-11) actually collecting clods of earth from which to create the first human. Otherwise, when God *spoke* things into existence, He set into motion His divine, creative "spirit" energy to accomplish the thing He commanded to exist!

Hebrews 11:3 says:

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed *by the word of God*, so that things which are seen were not made of things which appear [that is, of things that are visible] (emphases added).

God's *command* (word) set into motion an energy force that caused the resultant creation to appear out of nothing. Such is part of the meaning of "Holy Spirit."

Some attempt to interpret the term *Word* in John 1:1 (3x) as though it was something that the one God of the Trinity *spoke*. There is a fundamental difference between John 1:1-3 and Hebrews 11:3. Two different terms are used: *Logos* and *rhema*.

As we have already seen, the Greek term in John 1:1 is *Logos*. It is true that *logos* can be the spoken word in a variety of contexts. However, *BAG* posits that there was a widespread

concept of *the Logos* that was considered to be an *independent, personified* “Word” of God that represented more than the mere verbal expressions that came from God’s mouth (see Deut. 8:3 and Matt. 4:4). John used this concept to set forth the distinctive teaching in the book of John that this Logos – through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20b) – took on human form in the person of Jesus Christ. Here is where you begin to put together the “puzzle pieces” from our previous discussions.

Review what you have learned from Philippians 2:5-11. Review what you have learned from Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22 about how Jesus Christ *revealed* the Father. What do you find? You find what Paul so openly asserts in 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Ephesians 1:3: There is one God, the Father and one Lord, Jesus Christ. The Father is the *God* of Jesus Christ. We discussed how these Divine Partners came to occupy the separate, distinct offices they now execute. Put it all together in order to get the truth that is revealed here from scriptures.

We know that the Logos was God the Father’s *Spokesman*, another allowable definition (John 1:3; Col. 1:16). In fact, Hebrews 11:3 is a description about how Jesus Christ actually *spoke* the creation into existence. The term used there is *rhema*, which means “*commandment, order, direction*” (BAG; p. 742). In Hebrews 1:3, the expression “by the word of His power” essentially means “the mighty creative word” (Ibid.). This is also reflected in Genesis 1 in every verse that reveals Him “saying” that something should exist.

In short, this is an appropriate, fitting description of how *Elohim* uses “Holy Spirit” to enforce their will regarding their creation and the purpose for which it exists.

Applications in Scripture

In Genesis 6:3, what did the Lord God say would not always strive with mankind? What major difference between God and man did He cite? Note that the Lord God differentiated between God and man by saying that man is *flesh* with a limited lifespan. It can be loosely translated to say: “a temporary bag of skin, bones, and blood.”

Consider the following two translations of the same verse: (a) *Moffatt* – “Human creatures are but flesh; my spirit is not to be immortal in them; they shall not live more than a hundred and twenty years”; (b) *The Jerusalem Bible* – “My spirit must not be forever disgraced in man, for he is but flesh; his life shall last no more than a hundred and twenty years.” Remember: Apply the meanings of ruach that we discussed above. Here, God is simply saying that His ruach (“breath of life”) is not going to be a source of immortality for mankind. After all, even among the righteous, why should God use His spirit to perpetuate anything of the carnal mind forever? This opposes the doctrine of the immortal soul.

Romans 8:5-11 shows us some important ideas in this regard. *First*, the carnal mind attends to the interests of the flesh, not the things of God. *Second*, while carnal mindedness is death and spiritual mindedness is life, the mixture of the two (Gen. 2:17) is not enough for God to want to perpetuate that mixture forever because it, too, is capable of sinning against God and man. Until the individual is “born again,” s/he will only partially know and understand the spiritual (see 1 Corinthians 13:9, 10, 12).

Third, God wants His people to be spiritually minded because of the potential for eternal life. The presence of the spirit identifies the individual as a child of God (Rom. 8:9, 16). As long as that spirit is in an individual, s/he has the potential to be “born again” into a spirit-composed body like God’s that not only will not sin – it cannot sin. All of this agrees with Ephesians 1:13, 14, which shows that the Holy Spirit is given to the repentant individual as a down payment until s/he is fully purchased by the redemption of the fleshly body (see 1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

It is important to realize that the Holy Spirit can be frustrated and quenched if the carnal mind is allowed to dominate. Paul warns us in 1 Thessalonians 5:19: “Do not quench [extinguish; subdue] the Spirit.” He says in Galatians 2:21 that he did not frustrate the grace of God – which simply means that he did not allow the carnal mind to dominate and risk quenching the Spirit. Such frustration would, in effect, neutralize the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual’s mind.

In Hebrews 6:4-8, Paul shows that those who have the Holy Spirit can, in fact, fall away from God's grace by rejecting God's truth. This is evidence that God will not endlessly strive with the contentious, carnal-minded individual. At some point, He will say: "Enough of this! If you do not truly desire what I have in store for you, enough to overcome your gross carnal mindedness, I will not force it upon you! You will suffer eternal death." In short, you will ultimately be destroyed (Mal. 4:1).

In Genesis 41:38, the Pharaoh recognized that the Spirit of God could give a mere human being some extraordinary abilities. This conclusion was reached after the Pharaoh had a disturbing dream (vv. 1-9). None of his magicians could interpret it for him. The Pharaoh's butler remembered having been imprisoned with the Pharaoh's baker and Joseph (Gen. 40). During that imprisonment, the butler and the baker had dreams for which they had no interpretations (40:5-8). Joseph told them that interpretations are God's province. That said, Joseph interpreted their dreams.

So, the butler recommended that the Pharaoh should get Joseph to interpret his dream. Joseph was taken from the prison, cleaned up, and brought before the Pharaoh. Joseph repeated to the Pharaoh that God is the true interpreter of dreams. Then Joseph set about telling the Pharaoh what God revealed to him. In the process, Joseph was also able to lay a plan for the problems revealed in Pharaoh's dream. The Pharaoh was so impressed that he made Joseph a ruler next in authority to Himself. His comment is found in vv. 38, 39:

Can we find such a one as this is, a man *in whom the Spirit of God is*? And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Foreasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is none so discreet and wise as you are."

Read v. 45. Notice that the Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to one that fit his relationship with God. The name *Zaphnath-paaneah* means "the man to whom secrets are revealed" or, "a revealer of secrets." Now, go back and read the entire story in order to understand how the power to do extraordinary things

and understand things that are not generally understood by others is given by the infusion of the Holy Spirit.

In Numbers 11:1-15, Moses struggled with the murmuring and complaints of both the Israelites and the mixed multitude he had led out of Egypt. The mixed multitude “fell a lusting” (*KJV*) – what *BDB* defines as “longing for the dainty food of Egypt” (p. 16). The Israelites grew weary of eating manna and complained about not having any meat. The Lord God became so angry about their complaints and murmuring that He caused a fire to consumed many of them in “the uttermost part of the camp.”

This is a strange problem because they took with them out of Egypt “...flocks [goats and sheep], and herds [cows], even very much cattle” (Exodus 12:38; emphasis added). Why were they complaining about not having any *flesh* to eat? Moses even asks in Numbers 11:22 “Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? Or, *shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?*”

Had God placed the flocks and herds off-limits for consumption by the people – designating them for sacrifice only? There is no indication of that. Nor is there any indication that they were to be saved for the people to breed flocks and herds in the Promised Land. The problem with the people was a matter of *spirit*. They were consumed with lust for the delicacies they had eaten in Egypt: the fish, leeks, cucumbers, melons, onions, and garlic (v. 5). That lust diminished their trust in the Lord God’s deliverance and provision (see Ex. 17:1-3). Moses was so exasperated with them that he complained to the Lord God about being saddled with such a great responsibility. He even asked Him to summarily kill him (Num. 11:10-15)! Can you imagine how exasperating that must have been for Moses?

What was the Lord God’s solution to this problem? Read Numbers 11:1-18. Note the part where the Lord God tells Moses that He will take part of the *spirit* (defined by *BDB* as “*spirit of God*” (*ruach Yahweh*); p. 925) that He had given to Moses to increase and enhance his understanding of God’s thoughts and ways and put it upon the 70 elders of Israel to share the load of the continued exodus. Was He going to *decrease* the amount of

ruach Yahweh that Moses had – or simply multiply it by spreading it around among the 70 elders?

Numbers 11:24-30 tells us what happened when the ruach Yahweh was given to the 70. There is no indication that Moses' investment of Holy Spirit was diminished, but there is adequate indication that the 70 elders had an increase in understanding and wisdom ... v. 25 indicating that the transfer was visible because the 70 "prophesied, and did not cease" (*KJV*).

Since v. 24 says that they were "set round about the tabernacle," it is not clear if this was inside or outside the tabernacle. Even if it was outside, it is not clear how many of the congregation of Israel could actually see what was going on. The pattern of the tribal positions in their assigned encampments relative to the tabernacle was probably not conducive to a very great public view. Note the expression in v. 1 about "the uttermost parts of the camp" (emphases added). How many among the estimated 2.5+ million people in the exodus would have been seriously focused on a small group of men meeting at the tabernacle?

The term prophesied is defined by *BDB* as: "prophesying in the ecstatic state under the influence of divine spirit" (p. 612). The "ecstatic state" does not imply that they were doing this like a "Pentecostal" frenzy. They were in control of their own minds (see 1 Cor. 14:32). The difference was that they now possessed greater spiritual knowledge and understanding, and ... they began to express joy and thanksgiving for the things of God that they would thereafter teach and instruct those under their charges. They would also be responsible for making judgments about problems that arose among the Israelites.

In vv. 26-30, there were two men who were invited to the meeting, but, for whatever reason, did not attend. Nevertheless, the ruach Yahweh "rested upon them" (v. 26). They immediately set about prophesying in the midst of the encamped Israelites. Some of those who attended the meeting expressed concern that they should have been included, but Moses refused to intervene ... commenting that he wished that the Lord God would spread His spirit more liberally among Israel (vv. 27-29). The gift is the Lord God's to give. Who can argue with that?

Understanding the Difference Between the “Spirit” of God and the “Spirit” of Man

Read 1 Chronicles 5:26. Does this scripture reveal that two pagan rulers also have *ruach*? In this case, the Lord God was not giving them “*holy* spirit”; He was using His own spirit to stir up the *minds* of these two Assyrian rulers to carry away the House of Israel out of Samaria as punishment for their gross sins against Him.

The same word is used to describe man’s “spirit” – what might more properly be called “temper” or “disposition” – or “unaccountable and uncontrollable impulse” (Ibid.). This would indicate that *ruach Yahweh* is also used to describe *God’s* mind and heart – His emotions and patterns of thought. You can see the same kind of application to David’s temper, impulses, and emotions in Psalms 142 and 143.

It is also applied to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remnant of the people in Haggai 1:14 as God stirred them up to complete the work on the house of God they had been sent to do. It was God who formed this *ruach* in man (Zechariah 12:1). However, the *ruach* in man is not the same as *ruach Yahweh*. The pagan rulers, like all of mankind, had mere human *ruach* – not *ruach Yahweh*. *Ruach Yahweh* is a gift from God. It is also the *power* to become *holy* in thought and deed.

Ecclesiastes 3:21 uses *ruach* to mean “breath.” This is the “breath of life” spoken of in Genesis 2:7 that caused man to become a *nephesh* – a living, breathing creature. Ecclesiastes 3:19 says that man and beast have the same kind of *ruach* (breath), but in verse 21 the Preacher says:

Who knows the *ruach* of man that goes upward [that is, the breath that leaves man at death and “returns to God”], and the *ruach* of the beast that goes downward to the earth [that is, the breath of the beast that simply dissipates at death]?

The RSV and others read: “Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the

earth? When man and animal die, their ability to *breathe* leaves them. Either way, this is not an affirmation that man is or has an immortal soul that leaves the body upon death. If that were the case, the beast would also be or have one. This is an affirmation from that day and time, that man does not have a personal existence after death – he must wait for a resurrection from the dead (see Job 14:1-16). The presence of such a breath distinguishes God from all of man’s molten idols (see Jeremiah 10:14).

In the New Testament, the Greek equivalent to *ruach* – that is, *pneuma* – connotes an intangible substance that possesses great power to create or destroy. It is always associated with power or force. This is in addition to its common meaning of “breath, blowing, wind, air, and spirit as part of one’s personality, spiritual state, state of mind, and disposition” (BAG). A Greek-English lexicon can help you to understand the word’s meaning in the context in which the word is used.

The noun *pneuma* is a neuter noun, but the pronoun form is often translated as “he” rather than “it” because of the Trinitarian belief that it is a personage in the Godhead. We can see similar examples of this in the German language, which uses gender-specific definite articles with each noun. The masculine definite article is *der*, the feminine is *die* (pronounced *dee*), and the neuter is *das*. Now let’s apply this to some German nouns translated into English.

The German noun *der Stuhl* is a masculine noun. It means “the chair.” The German masculine pronoun would be *er* – translated literally into English as “he.” The Germans would use a singular, third person, masculine pronoun as a substitute because, just like English, the pronoun must agree with the antecedent noun in *person* (first, second, or third), *gender* (masculine, feminine, or neuter) and *number* (singular or plural). When we translate *der Stuhl* into an English pronoun, we would not call “the chair” *he* because *chair* in English is neuter. We would use a neuter pronoun: *it*.

In like manner, *die Wand* is the feminine German noun for our English noun “wall.” The pronoun is *sie* (she). We know “wall” is neuter in English – and we would not refer to it as *she*

when changing “wall” to a pronoun. We would use the neuter pronoun *it*.

Finally, *das Mädchen* is the neuter German noun that means “a young, unmarried girl.” The corresponding neuter pronoun is *es* (it). We would not apply the English neuter pronoun “it” when translating *das Mädchen* into English. Any kind of girl in English is feminine – that is, *she*.

Translations from one language to another are not really done *literally*; they are done in language *equivalents*. The German expression *in eine Schlange stehend* is not translated literally into English as “standing in a snake.” Rather, we would translate it to mean “standing in a meandering line.” I hope this helps you understand this matter more fully and clearly. As much as some might detest the study of language, it is very useful for understanding some complicated concepts. We will learn more about this in Lesson Three: What is Man?

In 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, Paul uses the term *pneuma* three times in these verses. By using the above given definitions, can you tell what he means by each usage? For example: How would you explain verse 5 – “...that the *spirit* may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”? Is Paul speaking of the spirit as though it is a separate person from the individual?

The spirit in man serves an important purpose for God’s plan of salvation. How would God identify each separate individual if they had all died and returned to the dust of the earth? One might envision something like that in the song “They Call the Wind ‘Mariah’”: “I’m so lost, so doggone lost, not even God can find me!” Wouldn’t that be terrible?

However, God has a failsafe system that prevents such an awful thing from occurring to those to whom salvation is to be given. It is a very simple, failsafe system. Revelation 13:8 and 20:12 reveal that God has a “Book of Life” in which He records the names of those who are to receive eternal life. The presence of God’s Holy Spirit in the mind of the true believer is an identification marker that that individual belongs to God (see Rom. 8:16 and Eph. 1:13, 14).

It is not difficult in our day and time to draw an appropriate analogy for this – albeit, a crude analogy. The mind of the

human is, figuratively speaking, equivalent to the hard drive of a computer. As such, it provides a record by which God can reproduce the exact individual in spirit or mortal form – even if s/he were eaten by a shark, pooped out into the ocean, and dissolved into the briny deep! When God’s mind communicates with the human mind to share God’s intellect, it keeps a record of that exact individual for future reference. That record is kept in the Book of Life.

Paul distinguishes between the “spirit” of the flesh and the “spirit” of God in Galatians 5:16-26. They are identified as the “fruits” of whichever “spirit” drives the thoughts and actions of an individual: carnal or spiritual (see also Rom. 8:5-9). Make a chart showing the “fruits” of each “spirit” as a person might allow each to express itself.

Compare Isaiah 55:8-11 to Galatians 5:16-26. Which of the “fruits” represent God’s “thoughts” and “ways”? Would you classify God’s thoughts and ways as being the product of a holy mind or disposition? We find in Ephesians 1:4 that, before the creation of the orderly universe, God’s basic requirement for the humans He was about to create was that they should be holy, blameless, and loving (*KJV*). Which of the two groups of “spiritual fruit” best exemplifies those character traits? If you chose vv. 22-26, then you have chosen character traits that are driven by the way a person *thinks and acts* relative to the way God *thinks and acts*. Holy “spirit”.

First Corinthians 2:9-16 explains how the individual comes to understand the thoughts and ways of God. Please note that it does not come through man’s nature and inherent ability. Take note of vv. 10-13. Paul shows that God reveals His thoughts and ways to the spiritually mature (v. 6) by sharing His mind with our minds.

It is holy spirit – pneuma hagion: the spirit of holiness. No such power as holy spirit exists inherently in mankind. There are only two sources for such a power or force: God, the Father, and God, the Son. “God” has ruach/ pneuma, but ruach/pneuma is not “God.” Both the Father and the Son use ruach/pneuma to accomplish Their great purpose – but you will not find one scripture that refers to the Holy Spirit as being “God.” Come to

understand the various meanings of *ruach* and *pneuma* in their various scriptural contexts. Part of your personal responsibility in becoming “holy” is to “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

What is the “Holy Ghost”?

Do not be led astray by the term *Holy Ghost* in 1 Corinthians 2:13. It is not a *ghost* in the sense of a very popular superstition. The Greek term is *pneuma*. This is explained in the above discussion.

Some who believe in *ghosts* believe that it is the *disembodied spirit* of a person who has died. The first mention of the term is found in Genesis 25:8: “Then Abraham gave up the ghost and died” (*KJV*). The same term is used in Job 3:11; 10:18; 13:19; 14:10; and Lamentations 1:19. From which *Hebrew* term was that word *ghost* translated? The term is *gava*. What does it mean? “To breathe out; that is: to expire, to die” (*BDB*; p. 157).

Read Ezekiel 37:5-10. What will the Lord God do to the Israelites when He raises them from the dead? He will put *breath* into them. Why? Because they *expired*: the breath of life went out of them when they died. It has to be put into them again for them to live. Notice that this is a resurrection into the *flesh* as opposed to the *spirit*. The flesh cannot live without the “breath of life” (Gen. 2:7; 6:17; 7:15, 22).

Why, then, did the *KJV* translators use “Holy Ghost” to translate the Greek expression “*all en didaktois pneumatos*” (“but which the [holy] spirit teaches”)? Paul’s emphasis is on the act of God in pouring out supernatural power to reveal to His true people His thoughts and ways – enabling them to compare spiritual things with spiritual things (v. 14). I remember well back in the 1960s when a Hippie thought he was being “cool” by referring to the Trinity as “Daddio, Laddio, and the Holy Spook.” The Holy Spirit is not a *ghost* or a *spook* as we understand the terms in modern parlance. Paul is discussing the idea of *pneuma hagon* – the spirit power God enables us to become holy, blameless, and loving.

The Holy *Ghost* is not a reference to the disembodied spirit of Jesus Christ after He died on the cross. There is no such thing. Could you image all of the “disembodied spirits” of the multiple billions of the people who have died since the creation of mankind having the ability, for good or ill, to “haunt” the living? What a horrific scene of chaos and confusion that would make!

Conclusion

You should now be able to understand what “Holy Spirit” is and how it should affect the human mind and heart. It is the power of God to teach mankind His thoughts and ways, to create and sustain the creation, and to eventually bring mankind into His family. It is God’s power to give “gifts” of the spirit to mankind for a variety of purposes (read 1 Cor. 12 for a list of such gifts). It is God’s gift to enable us to *become holy* as He is holy (see again Lev. 19:2). When our hearts and minds are transformed by the renewing effect of “holy spirit,” then we will indeed be new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) who know and do the will of God (Rom. 12:1, 2).

Review Questions

1. How do you define the term *ruach Yahweh*? Be as complete and specific as you can be.
2. List three reasonable ideas that we can derive from the *Theological Dictionary*, George Eldon Ladd, and S. MacLean Gilmore about what “Holy Spirit” is.
3. How do the words *inspire*, *expire*, and *aspire* relate to *spirit*?
4. What does Genesis 1:2 reveal about God’s “spirit”?
5. Explain Genesis 6:3 relative to God’s “spirit.”

6. Explain the significance of Genesis 41:38, 45 relative to this discussion. Focus on two points: (1) extraordinary abilities and (2) revealed secrets.

7. Relative to “spirit,” what was the problem with which Moses struggled in Numbers 11:1-20?

8. Was “holy spirit” available to any among Israel during the time of Moses? What “proof” do you have? Study your notes from Numbers 11:17, 24-30.

9. How do you understand the role of *ruach* in 1 Chronicles 5:26? Is it the same as *ruach Yahweh*?

10. What is the “spirit in man”? Can man put his “spirit” into others? If so, how? If not, why not? To formulate your answer, use the term *inspire*. It should give you the information you need to do so. It should also give you a clue about how God puts His Spirit into man by inspiration and revelation (1 Cor. 2:11, 16).

11. How are Genesis 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 3:21 related? What does this understanding reveal about the difference between the true God and mankind’s false, idolatrous “gods”?

12. Is there any difference between the Old Testament *ruach Yahweh* and the new Testament *pneuma hagion*? Explain your answer.

13. When translators change the term “Holy Spirit” to the pronoun form “he,” does that really *prove* that the Holy Spirit is a *personage* in the Godhead? What is the difference between a *literal* translation and an *equivalent* translation? Does that help you understand the problem better? How?

14. In 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, Paul uses the term *pneuma* three times. By using the definitions and comments given in the study, explain Paul’s meaning in each case.

15. Use 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 and Galatians 5:22-26 to explain how “fruit of the Holy Spirit” are evidenced in the person who has been given “Holy Spirit” by God.

16. Can you find a single scripture that identifies “Holy Spirit” as being “God”?

17. Why does “holy spirit” not *inherently* exist in mankind? (Be sure you understand the definition of *inherent*.)

18. What is the most important lesson you have learned in this part of the study? How does it benefit your understanding of God’s truth?

Lesson Six

“Elohim” is an Expanding Family

Holy people, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit sent from the True God, have passed on the revelation we need to find the True God. One such man, the Apostle Paul, had revealed to him that God is an expanding family. Some in traditional Christianity laugh to scorn those who teach that mankind is to become part of the God (Elohim) family.

Many think humans will become angels ... if they can earn their wings. Others think humans will become never-dying, immortal humans – flesh-and-bone, but no blood.

Laugh if they will, be blind if they must, but God’s word is plain about the true potential of mankind!

Understanding the “Immortal Soul” Doctrine

Ephesians 1:4-14 is the single-most important revelation about the incredible potential that God has in store for mankind. There are several factors to which we should pay very close attention – factors that are very often overlooked by those who preach and teach the doctrine of the “immortal soul.”

That doctrine teaches that man is an immortal soul that inhabits a body of flesh, blood, and bones. It is best that I allow a “voice” from among those who believe and teach such a doctrine to state it for you:

It should be noted that man was made to live forever. It was after he sinned that he became subject to death. However, for that reason man’s animal principle of life

shall cease; his body shall return to the ground (Gen. 3:19). *But his soul, **the real person**, is immortal. It will never cease to be* (Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, Nashville: The Convention Press, 1971; p. 51; emphases added).

Please note the emphases in this explanation that the immortal soul is the *real person*. Why would such a statement be made? The source from which such a teaching originated is little understood among 32,000+ “Christian” denominations. They do not understand that the Bible *nowhere* states that man *is* an immortal soul ... or that man *has* an immortal soul. This can be a problem for you if you seek to worship God in Spirit and in *truth* (see John 4:23, 24 and Deut. 4:2; 12:29-32; Josh. 1:7; Prov. 30:6; Jer. 10:2, 3a; and Rev. 22:18, 19).

You will learn more about this in “Lesson Three: What is Man?” So, I will give you the bare minimum explanation to demonstrate the point I am making.

Originally, the concept *probably* came up in Genesis 4:26. Mankind had been under the influence of Satan for over two centuries after the debacle in the Garden of Eden whereby Adam and Eve chose to eat of the “fruit of the knowledge of good and evil” against the will of the Lord God (Gen. 2:17; 3:1-7). As the effects of this knowledge of good and evil spread among humanity, mankind moved further and further away from God’s will and leaned more and more to their own understanding.

The prophecy about the “seed” of the woman in Genesis 3:15 was understood to be about a “Savior Seed” who would deliver mankind from the Lord God’s curse. Genesis 4:1 shows that Eve believed she had given birth to that “seed” when she gave birth to Cain. The literal translation is: “I have gotten a man, even the Lord.” That being the case, it not unreasonable to believe that Cain grew up under the impression that he was the “Savior Seed.” How could this have motivated his thoughts and ways?

When Cain killed Abel – and the Lord God subsequently judged him and sent him into exile – there was no evidence that the “Seed” had actually come among mankind. When Eve eventually died, there was absolutely no evidence that *she* was

the woman who would give birth to such a “Seed.” That is when the speculation began. Who would be the woman to whom such a “Seed” would be born? Who would eventually be revealed to be that “Seed”? Genesis 4:26 provides a possible answer to how mankind dealt with those questions at that time.

Genesis 4:25 speaks of the birth of Seth. It is interesting that Genesis 5:3 does not mention the births of Cain and Abel in Adam’s lineage. It tells us that Seth was born 130 years after Adam was created. Seth’s name means “appointed.” We know from 4:25 that Seth was born to replace Abel. Genesis 4:3-5 and Hebrews 11:4 show that the Lord God had respect to Abel above His respect for Cain. That set into motion the jealousy that drove Cain to kill Abel. Abel was dead, and Cain was exiled. Seth was subsequently born to replace Abel. When Seth was 105 years old, he fathered Enosh (5:6). So, 235 years after Adam was created, an interesting thing happened among mankind.

According to 4:26, after the birth of Enosh, “then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” It would be strange if that had not been done since the death of Abel and the exile of Cain. A marginal reference to an alternate translation provides a clue to what possibly happened: “then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord” (emphases added). Some believe that this is where the name “sons of God” was started (Gen. 6:2). However, there is another possibility.

In Exodus 3:13, 14, Moses is being sent by the Lord God to confront Pharaoh about the Israelites being held in Egyptian slavery. Moses wants to know the Lord God’s name in case Pharaoh asks. “I AM THAT I AM” is His reply. It is generally understood that this name is the four-letter (tetragrammaton) YHWH that is used in Yahweh Elohim and that it identifies the Lord God as a self-existent Being who is not dependent on any other Being in all of creation for His existence. He can give up that self-existence voluntarily, but it cannot be taken away from Him.

My question is whether or not Genesis 4:26 reveals that some among mankind did either or both of two things: (1) some men began to claim that they were the “Savior Seed” (and their mothers claimed to be the “Mother” who gave birth to them), or

(2) some men began to claim that they did not need God to perpetuate their lives beyond the grave because they were immortal beings by their own right. They were self-perpetuating beings.

Do not underestimate the power of the serpent's statement in Genesis 3:5:

God knows that, the day you eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, your eyes will be opened and you will be as gods: knowing good and evil (author's paraphrase; emphases added).

The continued influence of Satan among mankind also cannot be underestimated. *False doctrine* is his stock and trade (see John 8:42-44). In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Paul so forcefully describes how this tempter and deceiver works his lies among us. Notice such terms as "false," "deceitful," "transformed," and "angel of light." Notice also that Satan has "ministers" who do the same thing and pose as "ministers of righteousness."

Now read Matthew 24:4, 5 and read the words of Jesus Christ about those who will come in His name to deceive many. Is there any reason why that prophecy has not been fulfilled through the passing centuries among over 32,000 "Christian" denominations? Is there any sound reason to deny Satan's influence in this great deception?

The lie of the "immortal soul" was more fundamentally established around the tower of Babel under the power of Nimrod and his wife Semiramis. I will give you the short version. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* says:

The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principle exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended (article: "The Immortal Soul"; emphases added).

This tells us that the concept is not intended in any of the teachings of the Old Testament – the scriptures used by the Jews and ultimately inherited by Christianity. Considering how most of ancient Israel attached themselves to the gods of the pagans, it is no surprise that they adopted some of the religious concepts of the pagans. Traditional Christianity has been no different as it has spread among the Gentile nations.

The Tower of Babel was built in “Shinar” (Gen. 11:2) – the ancient name of Chaldea and Babylon. It is from this area that the Babylonian “mystery” religion came to Egypt and thereafter spread to much of the succeeding world.

Herodotus, the famous Greek historian who lived in the fifth century before Jesus, says in his work *Euterpe* (chapter 123):

The Egyptians were also the first that asserted that the soul of man is immortal. ... This opinion, some among the Greeks have at different periods of time adopted as their own.

In fact, the Greek philosopher Socrates learned this religious philosophy directly from the Egyptians and taught it to his most famous pupil, Plato. Neither of these two pagan philosophers conceived of death as being without senses and perception (see Eccles. 9:10) ... it was merely the separation of the soul from the body. This separation supposedly takes place automatically upon the death of the body.

As various aspects of Greek philosophy, government, education, and religion were spread by the Roman Empire, most European nations adopted them. It is pagan religion/philosophy. It was “Christianized” very early on during the Apostolic Church age (see 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Pet. 1:1, 2; 1 John 4:1-3; and Jude 3, 4). God’s apostles vigorously fought these *syncretizations* (combining concepts that fundamentally oppose one another). Nevertheless, through the ages they have surfaced among “Christian” doctrine in things like the immortality of the soul, Christmas, Easter, and a host of other doctrines.

Here is a paraphrase of a recognized American theologian’s findings (a former professor of New Testament Theology at

Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA). Hebrew and Greek thought involve two opposite concepts about what man is, as well as two different concepts about how creation operates. In later Greek thought – that is, as a result of the influence of men like Socrates and Plato – *man is believed to be a duality of soul or spirit imprisoned in a body of material substance* (George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967, pp. 98, 99; emphases added).

The Greek philosophers taught that mankind's true life is in the realm of the soul or spirit that is imprisoned inside the decaying body. His true destiny is to escape the material and to fly to the invisible world of eternal reality. Body life is an unreal, ultimately spurious existence. True life begins when the soul or spirit is delivered from its entanglement with the evil, material world. Neither the Old nor New Testament reflects such a dualistic concept of man and/or creation (Ibid.).

Thus, Ladd explains what Herodotus and *The Jewish Encyclopedia* reveal: The immortal soul is imprisoned in the mortal body and is automatically released when that body dies. As such, *its life is not dependent on any other source for its existence.* Even in the afterlife, it does not die even if it is subjected to eternal punishment in hellfire. Why? It is as Hobbs declared: "It will never cease to be" (Hobbs; emphases added).

What conclusion can we draw from this information? Olhausen, in his comment in *Lange's Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 15:19, 20, says this: "The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and the name [that is, *immortal soul*], are alike unknown in the entire Bible" (emphases added).

Plato posited that the immortal soul "falls" from its heavenly heights and must be re-educated in the human body in order to re-discover how to climb back to "heaven." He claimed that the immortal soul *was not created* ... that it exists alongside "God," but is an inferior "spirit" to "God."

Let's return briefly to Hobbs because this matter of the doctrine of the immortal soul must be understood as unscriptural. It militates against scriptural revelation. It violates what God teaches us about the great potential of mankind according to His pre-creation plan and will. Here it is:

Man is twofold [that is: *dual*] in nature. He is both spirit and body. Man is not a body and has a soul. ***He is a soul and has a body.*** The body is mortal [that is: capable of dying]; the soul is immortal [that is: incapable of dying] (Ibid; emphases added).

How do the adherents to the doctrine of the immortal soul explain John 3:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 15:35-54? Jesus Christ taught us that we have to be *born again* in order to enter the Kingdom of God. He is not speaking of a *spiritual conversion of the mind*. How can we know this to be true? Read John 3:7, 8 where He speaks of this “born again”-to-“spirit” experience as being comparable to the *wind*: going unseen wherever it is inclined to go without let or hindrance. He is speaking of a change of the body’s composition.

Paul shows a great deal of clarity in 1 Corinthians 15:35-54. In his explanation of how the *resurrection from the dead* works (v. 35), he explains that *the body that is buried in the grave is not the same kind of body that will be resurrected from the grave* (v. 37). In v. 42, being “sown in corruption” means that the body that goes into the grave will putrefy and decompose. Being “raised in incorruption” means that it will be raised as a body that is *incapable* of dying, putrefying, and decomposing. These statements are important in understanding the next verses.

Verse 44 declares that the *natural body* that is buried will be raised as a *spirit body* – that is: it will be “born again” as a different body. Verse 46 declares that the spirit body *does not come first* ... which totally contradicts the doctrine of the immortal soul. The natural body will be succeeded by the spirit body. Paul shows how this will happen in vv. 50-54.

He specifically states in v. 50 that “flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” That means that you have to be “born again” from flesh to spirit to be in the Elohim family. When will that occur?

Verses 51, 52 tell us that not everyone will be dead when this rebirth takes place. According to the description in v. 52, this will take place *at the return of Jesus Christ*. We can understand from that what Job tells us in Job 14:10-15 (look it up and read

it): We will lie **dead** in the grave until God calls us out of it. The last part of 1 Corinthians 15:52 is self-explanatory: “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (that is: “born again”; emphases added). Compare this to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and note Paul’s statement about the “living” and the “dead” being changed together. Not only that, you can read Hebrews 11:39, 40 and see that Paul states very plainly that the Old Testament saints will be changed (“made perfect”: *KJV*) at the same time the New Testament saints are changed.

This, indeed, is supported by Jesus’ statement in John 3:13: “No man has ascended to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” I believe that the last part of that verse about the Son of man (“which is in heaven”) is John’s editorial remark ... basically because Jesus Christ was standing in front of the people to whom He was speaking – *not in heaven at the time*. Or, *KJV* is not being as clear as *Modern Language* (“...the Son of man [whose home is heaven] ...” or *RSV* (“...he who descended from heaven, the Son of man ...”). The *Luther Version* follows suit with “...nämlich der Menschen Sohn” (“namely, the Son of man), and the *Moffatt Version* states it: “...the Son of man, descended from heaven, *is the only one who has ever ascended into heaven*” (emphasis added). The point is this: *KJV* is a bit misleading at face value because of the way the comment is stated. Other translations clear up the apparent problem.

Paul uses two expressions in 1 Corinthians 15:53 that are central to our understanding of what is going on here: “put on incorruption” and “put on immortality.” If the real person is an immortal soul, why does s/he have to “put on” something that s/he already has as an immortal soul? Paul says that the living and dead have to “put on” the bodily characteristics that are incapable of dying, putrefying, and decomposing ... if they are to be admitted to the Elohim Family. As a matter of fact, they will put on eternal, self-perpetuating life that is no longer dependent on any other source for life. When this happens, death will no longer be possible (v. 54)!

If you understand this very fundamental truth from God’s word, then you are ready to understand how “Elohim” is an

expanding family. It is imperative that you “connect the dots” that exist among all of the information being presented to you.

The Plan Conceived “Before the Creation of the Orderly Universe”

Read Ephesians 1:4-14 with this question in mind: What has God planned to do with True Christians (note especially v. 5)? Focus now on v. 4: For how long has He planned this? The expression “before the foundation of the world” means that this was planned before the creation of the orderly universe (*BAG*; p. 446). The earth is commonly believed to be about 4.5 billion years old – the orderly universe, however, is just under 14 billion years old. So, this was planned *before* under 14 billion years ago!

Now, let’s focus on the term *foundation*. It is translated from the Greek term *katabole*. The definition of this term includes the *figurative* (*metaphorical* rather than *literal*) meaning of “conception.” This can be seen in Hebrews 11:11 where Sarah is credited with “conceiving a seed.” The *conception* of an idea carries the same meaning in a *metaphorical* sense. In that sense, we should understand that “conception” drives the “birth.” An idea that moves from conception to realization undergoes a “birth” process ... *figuratively* speaking. Before the actual process toward “birth” began, God *conceived* of creating a creature by which He could expand the *Elohim* family! The *idea* was the *beginning* of the “birth” process.

Now read vv. 5-7. By what process would this plan be accomplished? Pay attention to the terms *adoption* and *redemption* and the expression “made us accepted.” *Adoption* is used five times in the New Testament ... and only by Paul (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Eph. 1:5; and Gal. 4:5). It is translated from the Greek term *huiiothesia*. The term *huios* refers to a natural-born son. *Huiiothesia* refers to a child that is “*placed* as a legal child; that is, given status *equivalent to* a natural-born child.” That “child” is adopted, not natural-born. As such, the process of adoption requires the cancellation of all debts owed by the child,

the legal status equal to a natural-born child, and the change of the child's former name to the adopting family's name.

It is also important to understand the term redemption, which is translated from the Greek term apolutrosis. This word has several definitions that are illustrative of the adoption process. It originally meant that someone was buying back a slave or captive by a ransom. Paul shows in Romans 6:16 that we are the servants of those whom we obey. His point is that we are the servants of sin, but we ought to be the servants of righteousness. In Romans 7:1-6, he shows that we have been "married" to sin. The Law says that we must die to sin in order to be "married" to Jesus Christ. In effect, we are slaves to sin and must be redeemed by Jesus Christ in order to be free for adoption. First Corinthians 6:19, 20 shows that we have been "bought back" and, as such, have become the property of God.

Apolutrosis came to have a *figurative* meaning that is unique to the Christian faith. It means: "release from sin and finiteness; the freeing of our body from earthly limitations; a redemption through which we become God's property" (BAG; p. 95). Consider the great revelation of God's truth bound up in those definitions. Read Hebrews 9:14, 15. What can you understand from that according to the definitions given? Does this redemption give you access to a great inheritance?

That is the gist of Ephesians 1:14 where Paul shows that God has put up a partial payment (Holy Spirit) until the entire process of adoption can be completed. We, thereby, become the "purchased possession." How much more permanent will Psalm 24:1 become?

Now consider Luke 21:28. If your redemption draws near, what is about to happen to you? Is the full payment about to be made? Are you about to be totally and irrevocably freed from the consequences of your sins and the limitations of your body of flesh? Will you become totally and irrevocably God's "property"?

Then there is Romans 8:23 where Paul speaks of "the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body." What does he mean by that expression? When you are changed from flesh to spirit, you will no longer be limited by the human mind or the human body. As Jesus Christ puts it in John 3:8: the spirit body

will allow the person to be like the wind: unseen and able to go wherever s/he desires. Would you like to go to Saturn? Think it and you are there. Would you like to appear and disappear at will? Read John 20:19-26. These are examples of being freed from the limitations of the flesh. This will make the adoption complete. You will have become totally and irrevocably Elohim. This will be the completion of what was started in Genesis 1:26-28.

Genesis 1:26, 27 shows that *Elohim* had determined to create man in their “image.” The Hebrew term is tselem, which means that Elohim was going to create man in a form that resembles “God.” Paul says in Romans 5:14 that Adam was “the figure of him that was to come” (emphases added). Adam was the original sample of those who would be reproduced as the “human” kind ... and he was a sample of those who would eventually become the “God” kind. Being created in the “image” of “God,” therefore, means that man would be created to ultimately be/become the “God-kind.”

Paul also shows us in Hebrews 1:1-4 that Jesus Christ, after His resurrection from the dead (a dead human), was “the brightness of [the Father’s] glory, and the express image of his person” (emphases added). The Greek term charakter means the same thing as the Hebrew term tselem. Jesus Christ is a sample of what God has planned for mankind to be if they allow themselves to be trained in His holiness and qualify to be added to the Elohim Family. This is the idea behind Paul’s comments in Hebrews 12:1-10 – v. 10 alluding to our becoming “partakers of his holiness” [that is: His divine nature] (see also 2 Peter 1:4).

Paul further states in Hebrews 1:4 that the “body” and “nature” that “born again” mankind will receive is superior to that of the angels and the name they will receive is better than that of the angels. In vv. 5, 13, Paul says that this kind of potential was never offered to any angel at any time. In fact, as “born again” children of God, man will be given thrones, scepters of rulership, and positions in the government of God (v. 8). They will assume favored positions at the right hand of God with Jesus Christ (v. 13). None of this is possible for the flesh-and-blood human being.

In Hebrews 2:5, Paul says this: “God has not put the world to come under the rulership of the angels.” This statement introduces an important explanation of the “ruling realm” of the world to come. He frames his argument on David’s question in Psalm 8:4-6 about why God is mindful of mankind. His answer comes in Hebrews 2:10, 11.

The first point is of the utmost importance – few pay attention to the depth of the importance of these two verses. First, he explains in v. 10 the role played by Jesus Christ: (1) He was to bring many sons to glory, and (2) He was the “captain” of the “salvation” of mankind. In v. 11, Paul says that the one who makes men holy and the ones who are made holy have one Father; therefore, Paul infers that they become *the same family*.

Let’s drop back to v. 10 and discuss the terms *glory* and *captain*. Discussing the meanings of terms assists in pointing us in the correct direction about what God planned before the creation of the orderly universe.

Glory is from the Greek term *doxa*. If I took all of the information given in *BAG*, I could write a considerable study about this term. Essentially, it is defined as “*brightness, splendor, radiance*.” Think back to Hebrews 1:1-4 where it describes Jesus Christ after His resurrection from the dead ... the “*brightness of His glory [doxa]*.” Read 1 John 3:1-3. John admits in v. 2 that he did not know exactly what we shall be like when we ultimately become the reborn sons of God, but he was convinced that we shall be like God is. *BAG* says in a portion of its definition that *doxa* is: “The state of being in the next life is thus described as participation in the radiance and glory [of God]” (p. 202, 203). This is what Paul and Peter speak of when they say that we shall be partakers of God’s *divine nature*. That is a *family* resemblance.

The term *captain* explains much about why Jesus Christ gave up His divine life to become a human being. Again, scant attention is payed to this marvelous revelation. The term *captain* comes from the Greek term *archegos*. The *archegos* is the one who *begins* something – the *first in a series* who provides the impetus for others to follow. He is the *originator* of an idea.

He is the one who *pioneers* the process – the one who goes first to scout out an unknown territory (BAG; p. 112).

The same Greek term is used in Hebrews 12:2 to describe Jesus Christ as the *author* of our faith. *He had to have the same faith in the Father's power to execute the "born again" experience that He expects of us!* Paul so cogently explains this in Acts 26:22, 23 when he declared to King Agrippa that Moses and the Prophets had witnessed that the Christ would be the *first* to be raised from the dead – in essence, the first to be “born again” from flesh to spirit. *Jesus Christ was the "guinea pig" for this process!* And ... Daniel prophesied this very thing in Daniel 12:2, 3 when he spoke of the “wise” being resurrected from the dead to everlasting life and shining as the “brightness of the firmament ... as the stars forever and ever.”

That done, the plan of God will have been brought to its great objective of *adopting* mankind into the *Elohim Family!* Paul asks a very important question in Hebrews 2:3: “How shall we escape [the penalty of sin], if we neglect so great salvation?”

Beyond the Return of Jesus Christ

Many believe that the return of Jesus Christ is the end of the possibility of salvation for mankind. According to this belief, all that is left is the judgment of the incorrigibly wicked. Whoever was not “saved” before the return of Jesus Christ will suffer eternity in the non-consuming, but everlasting, fires of hell. It is as if they totally disregard what happens on the earth for 1,000 years after Jesus Christ's return. Revelation 20:5 says that the “rest of the dead” will be raised to life at the end of the 1,000 years. They posit no teachings about what will happen *during* the 1,000 years or afterwards. This is a great lesson about the plan of God and how He has definitely “loved the world” (John 3:16-19). Consider the following explanation seriously and compare it to what you have been taught.

Revelation 11:15 prophesies that Jesus Christ will be King of kings and Lord of lords over *the kingdoms of the earth* when He returns. Revelation 5:10 prophesies that the saints will be kings and priests who reign on the earth. Revelation 19:11-16

prophecies that He will conquer the nations of the earth and rule them with a rod of iron. These scriptures demonstrate the fulfillment of prophecies in Daniel 2:34, 35, 44, 45; 7:13-27 – all of which prophesy God’s Kingdom being established on the earth from that time forever. What is the purpose of this Kingdom? Perhaps you will learn from this explanation something that you have never heard or understood before.

When Jesus Christ returns and takes the newly “born again” saints to the cloud in the upper atmosphere of the earth (see 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Rev. 6:12-17; 14:14-16), the “marriage supper of the Lamb” will take place (Rev. 19:5-9). Once that is completed, He and His saints will descend to the earth to intervene in the war against Jerusalem that is often called “the Battle of Armageddon” (see Zech. 14:1-16). Zechariah 14:9 says that Jesus will be “king over all the earth.” Isaiah 2:1-5 shows that He will establish His world headquarters in Jerusalem and begin the process of enforcing God’s Law and settling disputes ... eventually bringing an end to all conflicts and establishing peace over everything under His control (see also Jer. 31:31-34).

Read Zechariah 14:16 again. Did you notice that there are going to be *survivors* of that great, end-time war? Did you notice that He is going to enforce God’s Law over the inhabitants of the earth? *Did you realize that the survivors are human beings?* While Revelation 20:5 speaks of “the rest of the dead” being resurrected at the end of the 1,000 years, it says nothing about what happens *during* that time. Isaiah 2:1-5 is that explanation. The explanation is that these *humans* are going to be *re-educated* in God’s thoughts and ways and shown His unmitigated truth. They will be eligible to receive salvation and be added to the expanding *Elohim Family!* Have you ever understood such a thing before?

Peter explains in 2 Peter 3:9 that God is not content to allow any to perish. His will, from before the creation of the orderly universe, was that all should ultimately be saved. I am not so naïve as to think that *none* will perish, but I understand that the vast majority will be “saved.”

Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 that those who presently understand, believe, and live by God’s truth are God’s

“ambassadors” in the “ministry of reconciliation.” What is that? It is the process set into motion when Jesus Christ inaugurated the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) to evangelize all nations regarding the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God. This is part and parcel to Colossians 1:20 where Paul declares that all things in heaven and on earth will be reconciled to the Father through Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:9-11 is more specific:

God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in *heaven*, and things in *earth*, and things *under the earth*; that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father (emphases added).

I hope you grasp the gravity of that statement. Imagine an effort to reconcile *all of creation* to God the Father so that as many as possible can be redeemed out of *vanity* and *bondage to corruption* (Rom. 8:20, 21) – that is: out of a vain and purposeless existence (read Eccles. 1) because of sin and out of the slow, but sure, downward spiral to self-destruction to which God delivered sinful creation (see Matt. 24:21, 22; Rom. 1: 24, 26, 28). Social, sexual, and spiritual degeneration are the by-products of the carnal mind bound up in sin and rebellion against God. The “ministry of reconciliation” is God’s answer to saving mankind and creation out of that downward spiral to self-destruction (see also 2 Tim. 3:1-9). And ... Jesus Christ has been made the Chief Executive Officer to execute God’s plan and bring it to its resolute objective.

The 1,000-year period before the “New Heavens and New Earth” are created will be a time during which Jesus Christ and His saints deal with the *survivors* (and subsequent offspring) of that great climactic battle at Jerusalem (Zech. 14). According to Isaiah 2:1-5, their job will consist of preaching and teaching God’s unmitigated truth to them in an effort to extend the invitation to salvation to them. Slowly, but surely, through that period of time, mankind’s hearts will be changed and the earth

will be restored. The vast majority will be “saved.” God does not intend to fail; He does not intend to waste His creative power and lose His creation to Satan and sin (2 Pet. 3:9; Isa. 55:10, 11). Many multitudes more will ultimately enter the *Elohim Family*.

New Heavens and New Earth

Another aspect of scripture that is largely overlooked by mainstream Christianity is found in Isaiah 65:17-25. Isaiah specifically says that this part of the prophecy is about “new heavens and a new earth” (v. 17). This prophecy mentions something that few others even notice: the presence of *human beings* in that endless age of the future.

Why is that important to note? Because the basic assumption of most Christians is that the return of Jesus Christ brings to a close the age of *humans* and any further hope for salvation. Any who are not “saved” prior to His return will automatically go to hellfire to be tortured forever! This and other prophecies tell us a totally different story.

Maybe this is why Jesus Christ said that He did not come to do away with the Law or the Prophets (Matt. 5:17-19). It is because the Old Testament is about *Him* (John 5:46, 46). Law and Prophecy are supposed to lead us to *faith in Him* (Gal. 3:21-25). Isaiah 65:17-25 was inspired by *Him*; He was the Lord God of the Old Testament.

Let’s backtrack a bit to get a good “lead in” on this matter. Back in Revelation 20:5, we are confronted with a prophecy that says: “The *rest of the dead* did not *live again* until the thousand years were finished.” This indicates that there will be a resurrection from the grave at the end of the 1,000 years. There are some important inferences we can make based on that one statement.

Verse 6 mentions the *first* resurrection. *First* is an *ordinal* number. As such, there is a *required second* resurrection. Otherwise, there would only be “the resurrection” because there is no *order* to follow. Paul supports this in 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23 when he speaks of those who are to be made alive “in [their] own *order*.” Christ was the first. Those belonging to Him are

next. Is that the extent of the order – the sequence or arrangement? Do you understand that there will be more than one resurrection from the dead?

James 1:18 refers to “firstfruits of his creatures.” What is he talking about? We have to refer to Revelation 7 and 14:4 (note the comment at the end of 14:4 that says: “These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb”; emphases added). This is ordinal; so, you have to expect that there will be, at the least, secondfruits. Those who are “saved” during the 1,000-year completion of the “ministry of reconciliation” will be the secondfruits.

All who are spiritually converted to God’s truth during that 1,000-year period will ultimately be “saved” by Jesus Christ. I speculate here because I find no specific instruction to explain this “mystery.” The second resurrection will be similar to the first resurrection. It is reasonable to understand that the humans who are alive during that time will still be subject to a “life span” that ends in death. Some of them will be eligible for resurrection from their graves into spirit bodies, some will still be alive and will be instantaneously changed to spirit, and those who are alive and remain incorrigibly wicked will be thrown alive into the Lake of Fire and destroyed – not punished eternally. All of that commentary is about those who live and die during the 1,000-year period.

What about all of the dead who were not raised to eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ? After all, Revelation 20:5 says that “the rest of the dead” will be raised at the end of the 1,000 years. Only the “firstfruits” who qualify for eternal life” will be raised when Christ returns. It is apparent, then, that the “ministry of reconciliation” continues when “the rest of the dead” are raised from their graves at the end of the 1,000 years.

After Satan, Gog, and Magog are destroyed (vv. 7-9), attention is turned to the vast majority of mankind who was not part of either the firstfruits or secondfruits. This includes all who never had an opportunity to know about the True God, His Christ, or His gospel of the Kingdom of God. It includes those who were aborted, small children who experienced untimely deaths, those used as sacrifices to pagan “gods,” and all who

have been deceived by Satan through godlessness or false religions (see 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:4, 13-15; Rev. 12:9). It includes those who God did not “call” in the *first* and *second* orders (see John 6:44, 65 and Matt. 20:16; 22:14).

God is fair. He is willing to go to extremes to turn us from godless thoughts and ways. He is not content to simply allow mankind to be destroyed for lack of knowledge of His truth. That is why He has established an orderly method of remaining true to His original purpose as outlined by Paul in Ephesians 1:4-14. He is patient. All who desire to receive this great gift will have to live godly lives in Jesus Christ and choose “life” ... or they will suffer “death.” He plans to also have *thirdfruits*.

Revelation 20:11-15 gives us a brief look at what happens among this remaining group who will be resurrected in the second resurrection. There are “books” that will be opened – one of which is the “book of life.” We should be able to figure out at this point that none of this last resurrected group have their names written in the “book of life” (see Ex. 32:32, 33).

That implies that the other “book” that is opened is of some special importance to this group. They were to be judged “out of those things written in the books, according to their works.” Scripture is such a book because it is the revelation of Jesus Christ, from Genesis to Revelation, about how to repent, believe unto salvation, and enter the Family of God. If they have never had a chance to learn of such things, would God be fair and loving to summarily execute them? This is a time when “reconciliation” is offered to them without the confusion that exists with a plethora of religious views that distort and interfere with God’s unvarnished truth.

Back to Isaiah 65:17-25. Once this last group of resurrected humanity is thoroughly schooled in God’s thoughts and ways, they will have opportunity to go on to being “born again” as those before them have been. Please note 1 Corinthians 15:24-28: Jesus Christ will conquer all of God’s enemies ... including death (also note Rev. 20:14, 15). According to Jeremiah 31:31-34, He will have made the Holy Spirit available to all (see Joel 2:28, 29) so their hearts and minds can be transformed to know and obey His will. No one will have to continue an evangelistic

crusade to “preach Christ” because all, “from the least to the greatest,” will know Him.

It is remarkable to note that Isaiah 65:17-25 presents the fact that human beings will continue to exist in the New Heavens and New Earth. They will live to great ages. There will be peace and plenty for all.

It is not beyond belief that these humans will have come from among those raised to life in the second resurrection. Why? Jesus Christ and His “firstfruit” saints (the ruling realm of the Kingdom) will have defeated all of God’s enemies, including death and the grave. Any who are resurrected among that group who do not subsequently allow themselves to be reconciled to God will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and destroyed (Rev. 20:14, 15).

During whatever span of time they will be given to do so, some might not have been deemed spiritually mature enough to be changed from flesh to spirit before the New Heavens and New Earth are created. Because God intends to take His time to instruct them in His thoughts and ways, they, too, can be added to the Elohim Family at a later date. They would be the progenitors of the humans who continue to exist beyond the 1,000 years. Based on Isaiah 65:17-25, it is reasonable to believe that humans will continue to be born and live throughout the infinite eternity ahead so that the expansion of God’s Family will also be an eternal project.

Conclusion

God’s word reveals that Elohim is a family that presently consists of two divine Beings: one we know as God the Father and one we know as God the Son (Jesus Christ). Mankind was created to become part of Elohim through a process called “adoption” – that is, being changed from mortal flesh to immortal spirit. You can begin this process of salvation today by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, being baptized, and having hands laid upon you by a true minister of God for the receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

What a remarkable thought! What a remarkable God! What a great potential we have laid before us! How pregnant is Paul's remark in Hebrews 2:3 that we shall not be able to escape the consequences of neglecting so great a salvation! The converse of that is that we can inherit great and precious promises by accepting God's invitation to be part of His plan through Jesus Christ.

Elohim is a *family* term that denotes rights of inheritance and power-sharing. See also Romans 8:14-23, Galatians 3:26-29, Hebrews 2 (especially v. 11, which the *NIV*, *The Jerusalem Bible*, and others translate: "the one who sanctifies and the ones who are sanctified belong to the same stock/family"), Hebrews 6:13-20, and Revelation 5: 10; 20:4, 6. All of this presupposes *the expansion of Elohim!* And ... you can be part of it, too! Read John 1:12. What does he say we have the power to become though Jesus Christ?

Review Questions

1. According to Ephesians 1:4-14, what has God planned to do with true Christians?
2. When did He set this plan into motion?
3. What special *figurative* information is revealed in the Greek term *katabole*?
4. How far back in time would the term *foundation* take us?
5. Why do some teach that the immortal soul is the "real person"?
4. Explain Genesis 4:26. What possible connection does this have with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul? From where did that concept originate? How does the alternate translation help us to understand how mankind's thinking was still influenced by the "fruit of the knowledge of good and evil"?

5. Referencing Genesis 3:15, what is “the seed of the woman”?
6. Using Genesis 2:17, explain what the Lord God means by the statement: “You shall surely die.” Refer to Genesis 3:19 and the last part of 3:22 to help frame your answer.
7. If mankind dies and returns to their “dust,” how does God intend to give them life beyond the grave? How does this relate to John 3:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:50?
8. Explain John 3:13.
9. Explain 1 Corinthians 15:53.
10. Read 2 Corinthians 4:6 through 5:8. How does this relate to 1 Corinthians 15:35-54?
11. What is huiiothesia? How is it different from huios?
12. What is apolutrosis? How is it involved with huiiothesia? Use Ephesians 1:14 and Romans 8:23 to help frame your answer.
13. Explain Luke 21:28 and Romans 8:23 relative to apolutrosis. What two things occur as a result of the completion of the adoption process? Why is that important relative to John 3:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:50?
14. Using Genesis 1:26, 27, Hebrews 1:1-4, and 1 John 3:1-3, explain what God’s “image” is.
15. Explain Hebrews 1:4 relative to the terms tselem and apolutrosis. How does that relate to the term doxa?
16. Were any angels at any time offered tselem and huiiothesia? What is their role in God’s plan for mankind? What name was never offered to the angels?
17. Explain the term archegos relative to Hebrews 2:11 and 12:2.

18. Explain Hebrews 2:11 relative to the *KJV* expression “all of one.”

19. Is the return of Jesus Christ the end of God’s plan for expanding His family? Why/why not?

20. Are those who claim that there is *not* going to be a literal Kingdom of God on the earth correct in their understanding of scripture? Use Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:13-27; Isaiah 2:1-5; Zechariah 14:9; Matthew 24:14; Mark 1:14, 15; Revelation 5:10; 11:15; and 19:11-16 to help frame your answer.

21. Where will the headquarters of the Kingdom of God be established? What does this tell you about where the Kingdom of God will be established?

22. What will be accomplished during the 1,000-year period after the return of Jesus Christ?

23. What is the generally unnoticed aspect of the prophecy in Isaiah 65:17-25?

24. Why is that important to understand?

25. Using 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 and Revelation 20:14, 15 to frame your answer, when do the “New Heavens and New Earth” occur?

26. In Revelation 20:5, who are “the rest of the dead”?

27. What does Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 15:23 when he speaks of an *order* of resurrections? Can you understand, by the instruction you have received, that John 5:28, 29 is speaking of two *types* of resurrections, not necessarily the *total number* of resurrections?

28. Briefly explain the different resurrections you have studied in this lesson. How are the incorrigibly wicked treated?

29. Is the “Great White Throne Judgment” of Revelation 20:11-13 a third resurrection, or is it part of the second resurrection? Explain how you derive your answer.

30. Why will there be no more resurrections after the “Great White Throne Judgment”? Use 1 Corinthians 15:26 and Revelation 20:14, 15 to help frame your answer.

31. Using Romans 6:23 and 1 John 3:4 to help frame your answer, will there be any sin committed during the “New Heavens and New Earth”?

32. How long into the future will God continue to expand His family? Does that surprise you? Why? Are you convinced by scripture that there will be thirdfruits and beyond?

33. What is significant about the terms first and firstfruits? Use the difference between cardinal and ordinal numbers to help frame your answer.

34. From Revelation 20:11-15, explain the significance of the terms “books” and “book of life.” What is the difference between them?

35. What significant things have you learned about the expanding family of God? Does it give you a new sense of your importance to God?